

February 19, 2025

Testimony in support of SB 691

Senate Committee on Early Childhood and Behavioral Health

Chair Reynolds, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Amy Powers, my pronouns are she/her, and I am the Executive Director at APANO Communities United Fund, a culturally-specific organization that strives to unite our community to build power, develop leaders, and advance equity through organizing, advocacy, community development, and cultural work. I am also here as a mother that envisions a robust mental health system that is equitable, affordable, culturally responsive, community-centered, community-driven, and adequately serves those who have historically experienced the least access.

Today I urge you to not only support SB 691, but the whole Omnibus package of SB 691, SB 692, SB 693, SB 694, and SB 695. This collection of lifesaving bills would provide incredible support to new and about to be mothers, as well as their children. I hope that you take to heart the testimonies of fellow mothers and caregivers. When I had my first child, I struggled to navigate the world, while dealing with the challenges of becoming a new mother, with income instability, food insecurity, little access to health care, and housing insecurity.

The lack of services for substance use disorder and behavioral health breaks families apart and causes lasting trauma for children. Children born to people with substance use disorders are more likely to have child welfare involvement. In 2023, 62.1% of Oregon children entered foster care due to parental drug and alcohol use. However, the impact is not felt equally—Black children were twice as likely to enter foster care, and American Indian or Alaska Native children were more than three times as likely. These disparities stem from systemic inequities in health care access, housing, and culturally responsive treatment options. Expanding integrated prenatal medical care, substance use disorder treatment, and housing-based supports through programs like Project Nurture or Nurture Oregon can reduce racial disparities in child welfare involvement. These programs have shown to decrease foster placements in the first year of life, decrease risk of child maltreatment, and increase the number of prenatal visits. Investing in culturally responsive peer support, doula services, and early intervention in substance use disorder treatment is critical to improving outcomes for Black, Indigenous, and Oregonians of color.

I urge you to join me in supporting SB 691, and the other bills on the Omnibus package, to provide for mothers, children, and families all across the state. I am confident that this series of



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bills, crafted with the input and support of community members, will pave the way for a better future for our most underserved populations.

Thank you,



Thank you,
Amy Powers

APANO Communities United Fund