



February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Dear Chair Reynolds, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee on Early Childhood and Behavioral Health,

My name is Dr Josh Reagan. I am a family physician with expertise in treatment of addiction. I've been the medical lead for Project Nurture at Providence in Portland for 10 years. I also teach in a family medicine residency clinic, helping to develop the future family physicians of Oregon.

In the hearing for SB 691 you heard about the urgency and cruelty of the fentanyl epidemic in Oregon and how hard it is to treat fentanyl addiction. You also learned about the stigma and guilt that pregnant women with addiction face and how healthcare environments can reinforce these experiences. And you heard about how the fear and trauma of removing newborns from their parents' care causes worse outcomes rather than better ones.

The standard care we provide to all pregnant women is simply not enough for women in the throes of addiction. Nurture programs are the current best approach we have to tackle these complex challenges. It is an intensive and effective model of care, but we need funding and support to be sustainable and continue to provide these services. This bill would fix that.

The Nurture site I lead illustrates what happens without this support. We started in 2015 and hired one peer mentor to help take care of all our patients. Although the program grew and exceeded the standard caseload for peer mentors, we couldn't hire additional peers since peer services in a medical setting cannot be reimbursed. Our sole peer mentor did this work selflessly for almost 9 years because she had lived it and believed in it. But the caseload and demands were unsustainable. For a year we've tried to operate without a peer on our team, but we struggle to attract or retain patients, and now fewer patients in our program successfully engage in treatment and gain custody of their infants. All Nurture programs need to be able to bill for peer services. This bill would fix that.

I've been a family medicine doctor for 25 years and this work with Nurture is the most important work I have ever done. It is an opportunity to improve the lives of the mom and baby I am caring for today, and their children and grandchildren in the years to come. Please support SB 691 to allow us to appropriately care [alt: to make the Nurture model the standard of care across Oregon] for all pregnant women struggling with addiction.

Thank you so very much for your time.

Josh Reagan, MD

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