

Submitter: Aver Yakubu
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB692

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 692, particularly the provisions related to sustainable payment models for community-based lactation professionals. This includes certified lactation counselors (CLC) and certified lactation educators (CLE) being considered Medicaid billable providers. While the doula component of this bill has garnered much attention, it is equally critical that we ensure equitable access to lactation support services through sustainable funding mechanisms.

As the Program Director at Nurturely, a perinatal equity and wellness organization, I oversee programs that provide perinatal education and services throughout Oregon. Our work includes sponsoring scholarships for doula training, offering professional development support and mentorship for doulas, and providing lactation training to direct service professionals and families. Through these efforts, we have seen firsthand the immense value that culturally responsive, community-based perinatal professionals bring to the families they serve.

Lactation support is essential for maternal and infant health, yet access to these services remains inequitable, particularly for global majority communities and rural populations. Research shows that comprehensive lactation support improves breastfeeding initiation and duration rates, which in turn reduces the risk of chronic disease, supports infant immune health, and strengthens maternal-infant bonding. However, many families face significant barriers to receiving this care due to cost, lack of insurance coverage, and insufficient lactation professionals in their communities.

To address these gaps, we must establish sustainable payment models that fairly compensate community-based lactation providers. Just as we have recognized the value of doulas in improving birth outcomes, we must ensure that lactation consultants and peer supporters (who are sometimes also doulas) are reimbursed for their essential services. Without sustainable funding, we risk reinforcing disparities and limiting the reach of these critical professionals.

SB 692 presents an opportunity to make meaningful progress in ensuring that all Oregon families have access to culturally relevant, high-quality lactation support. I urge you to support this bill and advocate for the inclusion of community-based

lactation providers in Oregon's healthcare reimbursement systems.

Thank you for your time and commitment to improving maternal and child health in our state.