



February 18th, 2025

Testimony in support of SB 691

Senate Committee on Early Childhood and Behavioural Health

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

My name is Sam Guthman, my pronouns are she/her and I am the Policy Manager at APANO Communities United Fund (CUF), a culturally-specific organization that unites Asians and Pacific Islanders to build power, develop leaders and advance equity through organizing, advocacy, community development and cultural work. However, I am also here as a member of the Oregon Heals Coalition, a collection of community advocates, licensed medical professionals, and concerned constituents 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 life-saving bills would provide incredible support to new and about to be mothers, as well as their children. I hope that as you hear and read testimonies today, you think of your own mothers and caregivers. The people who sacrificed themselves for your own well-being. I personally could not imagine trying to navigate the challenges of becoming a new mother while dealing with mental health crises, income instability, and housing insecurity. But I have seen my loved ones go through the awesome responsibility of child rearing and can only urge you to do whatever we can to support them through that journey.

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 other Oregonians of color.



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

APANO Communities United Fund (CUF)



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