



**Written Testimony in Support of SB 693**

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**Affiliation: Mental Health Champion for The Oregon Heals Coalition**

**Date: February 20, 2025**

Dear Senator Reynolds and Members of the Senate Committee on Early Childhood and Behavioral Health,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a written testimony in support of SB 693 to establish a task force on the perinatal workforce in Oregon.

My name is Diana Nguyen, and I am a public health graduate student with a commitment to patient advocacy, health equity, and improving access to mental health services. I am also a Mental Health Champion for the Oregon Heals Coalition, an alliance of non-profit and advocacy organizations working together to achieve a robust mental health system in Oregon that is equitable, affordable, culturally responsive, community-centered, and adequately serves those who have historically experienced the least access. This year, the Oregon Heals Coalition built our 2025 Legislative Agenda in partnership with the community. To do so, we recruited 5 Mental Health Champions with backgrounds in the mental health field and determined SB 693 would gain our support as one of our priorities.

Currently, Oregon does not have the infrastructure, policies, or perinatal workforce to support optimal maternal and infant health, including mental health conditions like postpartum depression. It is well-known that the healthcare workforce shortages and geographic maldistribution of providers limit access to needed perinatal services which leads to missed opportunities to identify mental health conditions in pregnant and postpartum individuals and linking them to appropriate interventions.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, Oregon should leverage opportunities, such as the proposed legislation, to build the capacity to grow and develop the workforce,

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/healthypeoplefamilies/datareports/pages/maternal-mortality-morbidity-review-committee.aspx>



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expand the provider-type network, and invest in workforce pathways to increase the reasonably accessible and quality of perinatal health services.

The perinatal workforce task force, as proposed in SB 693, will evaluate the current state of the perinatal workforce in Oregon, identify barriers related to accessing existing workforce pathways, review programs in Oregon and outside that have successfully increased access and diversity within the workforce, and make recommendations to improve the availability of providers, to increase the racial, ethnic, linguistic, and geographic diversity of the perinatal workforce, and to increase the cultural competence of the existing perinatal workforce.

I urge you to **vote “YES” on SB 693** to ensure that Oregonians have access to high-quality, family-centered, culturally-competent, and equitable perinatal healthcare professionals.

Thank you for considering my testimony,

Diana Nguyen

The Oregon Heals Coalition

