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RE: Testimony submitted to the Oregon Senate Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health for the hearing of Senate Bill 691

February 20, 2025

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

Thank you to the chair and the committee for the opportunity to submit my written testimony.

My name is Nancy Zink, and I have worked with Project Nurture patients at the OHSU hospital since 2016. I have been integrally involved in the Richmond and CODA program for the past 3 years. This year I'm working on expanding the Project Nurture program to a new site at Family Medicine at East Portland. I have been a family medicine doctor for over 25 years and passionately believe in this work improving the lives of our patients in deeper ways than our clinical interactions in the hospital and clinic settings.

Here are two patient examples.

Patient J joined Project Nurture in 2023 when she was pregnant. She has demonstrated continued engagement with Project Nurture, graduating from the CODA program and moving to the Richmond program. She now trusts us enough to divulge her mental health struggles and we are actively treating them. It is through this model of care that she is staying drug free and able to parent her child

Patient M recently delivered a baby that went through neonatal opiate withdrawal syndrome. I helped her work through learning to take care of her baby with complex needs, including a feeding tube, when I lead the inpatient Family Medicine team. Most recently I

saw her and her baby at the outpatient clinic. Baby and mother are now thriving due to this program's expanded support services.

Our team at CODA and Family Medicine at Richmond can only continue to support these patients with monetary support from external sources. Our doctors only get paid for time actively seeing patients. However, doctors are an integral part of the care team and can bridge the gap between outpatient and inpatient medicine. They need to attend and contribute to patient huddles. These are meetings held at all Project Nurture sites, except Richmond, due to the lack of monetary support.

As previously mentioned, the Project Nurture care team is vital to patient success. Peer mentors and doulas help our patients seek care when they are most vulnerable and really need medical care. Without these team members, many of our patients would not go to the hospital or clinic visits. Currently, peer mentors and doulas are funded through one-year grants. It is very difficult to build a strong program when funding is only available on a 12-month basis. OHSU does not want to hire people who are funded for 12 months only.

Thank you for listening

Please support SB 691 to allow patients to receive the care they need

Nancy Zink, MD

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