

Kat Peterson  
Salem, Oregon  
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Dear Oregon Senate Committee of Early Learning and Behavioral Health,

When I was serving to support my local HeadStart, I noticed that the earlier families received support with positive childhood experiences (PCEs) the better outcomes from adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Nine years ago, I shifted my professional life to support families in the perinatal period and the first few years of children lives. At a local level, I run a nonprofit, Compass Perinatal Peer Support, that focus on parents and their children through a play support groups to create a safe space for perinatal mental health. By supporting Senate Bill 695, this legislation will ensure that pregnant individuals and their families receive the comprehensive and integrated care they need throughout pregnancy, birth, and the postpartum period which is a critical step toward improving maternal and child health outcomes in our state.

The main points of SB 695 focuses on key areas essential to maternal and child well-being:

1. **Strengthening the Perinatal Workforce** – SB 695 bill requires CCOs to develop plans that support and expand the perinatal workforce, including doulas, community health workers (CHWs), peer support specialists, behavioral health workers, and lactation specialists. As a CHW and together with our doulas, we have a unique role to provide support for families as soon as they enter our program from giving support of connecting families to medical providers, mental health professionals, local resources to food, housing, childcare, and so much more. We need more trained traditional health workers, to serve more communities throughout the state and particularly rural areas.
2. **Implementing a Whole-Person Maternal Health Model** – By mandating comprehensive needs assessments and behavioral health risk screenings during the first prenatal care visit, SB 695 promotes early identification and intervention for health and social needs. This proactive approach ensures that expectant mothers receive the necessary support for their physical, mental, and emotional well-being, reducing the risk of complications and adverse outcomes.
3. **Integration for Early Learning Hubs** – The bill prioritizes the integration of services across early learning, maternal care, and the critical first 1,000 days of a child's life. Through my local early learning hub, I have been able to take classes as a parent and with my children. I have also been able to attend training as provider in my community to provide the best support for the families I work with. Early learning hubs create a foundational place to fostering long-term developmental, educational, and health success.

By passing SB 695, Oregon will take a significant step toward improving maternal health, reducing disparities, and ensuring that all families receive the care and support they deserve. I urge you to support this essential legislation and help create a healthier future for mothers, infants, and families across our state.

Sincerely,  
Kat Peterson

Compass Perinatal Family and Community Support