

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

My name is Lily Ben-Avi and I am a third-year medical student at OHSU. I am writing to ask you to vote yes on SB 1039 to improve outcomes for mothers and babies in Oregon. As a medical student, I have witnessed firsthand how barriers to appropriate maternity care result in worse outcomes for patients. While living in Eastern Oregon for my Family Medicine rotation, I learned about the added challenges that pregnant patients in rural counties face in accessing prenatal and obstetric care. The local hospital had recently closed its obstetric unit, citing low profits and lack of staffing as the reasons for the closure. As a result of this closure, our patients were facing a minimum of two hours driving time to reach the nearest birthing center. I spoke with patients who were making difficult decisions to split up their families to be located near distant maternity wards for the later weeks of their pregnancies, and others who were opting to remain in town and risk devastating outcomes if they developed complications toward the end of their pregnancies. There is so much discussion around the worsening infant and maternal outcomes in childbirth in our country, yet it feels like hospital systems are actively reducing their investments in maternal health to prioritize profits at the expense of patient outcomes. As a medical student entering this profession, it is hard not to feel disheartened by the inequities that exist and continue to evolve within the field of medicine. SB1039 provides funding for the Oregon Perinatal Collaborative, which is fighting to provide anchor payments to keep small and rural birthing units open, as well as to improve availability of rural staffing for maternity wards. This measure will ensure that mothers and infants in rural counties have the same access to critical healthcare services as their urban counterparts. Please vote yes on SB 1039 to improve maternal and infant health across Oregon. Thank you for the work you do to support the health of mothers and babies.

Sincerely,  
Lily Ben-Avi  
Oregon Health & Sciences University  
School of Medicine