



WOMEN'S FOUNDATION of OREGON

*Invest in Women. Invest in Oregon. Invest in Change.*

Senate Committee on Early Childhood and Behavioral Health  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Reynolds and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Women's Foundation of Oregon, I am writing to express our strong support for Senate Bill 690, which mandates the Oregon Health Authority to study perinatal public health issues, including infant and maternal health, housing, substance use, behavioral health, and perinatal workforce development.

Our 2016 report, "Count Her In," identified eight areas of urgent concern for women and girls in Oregon, collectively known as the "Eight That Can't Wait." Among these, gaps in reproductive health access and the cost of caregiving directly relate to the objectives outlined in SB 690.

The report highlighted that many women in Oregon face significant barriers to accessing comprehensive reproductive health services, particularly in rural areas. Limited availability of providers and facilities means that essential perinatal care is often out of reach for those who need it most. By commissioning a thorough study of perinatal public health issues, SB 690 represents a critical step toward identifying and addressing these disparities, ultimately improving health outcomes for mothers and infants across the state.

Furthermore, the financial burden associated with caregiving disproportionately affects women, who often serve as primary caregivers. The "Count Her In" report found that the high cost of caregiving contributes to economic instability among women, impacting their overall well-being and that of their families. SB 690's focus on perinatal workforce development has the potential to alleviate some of these challenges by exploring strategies to support and expand the caregiving workforce, thereby reducing costs and increasing access to quality care.

In conclusion, SB 690 aligns with the Women's Foundation of Oregon's mission to address systemic inequities faced by women and girls in our state. We urge the committee to support this bill, as it promises to lay the groundwork for informed policies that will enhance perinatal health services and support systems, benefiting Oregon's women, children, and families.

Thank you for considering our perspective on this vital issue.

Sincerely,

Libra Forde  
Executive Director  
Women's Foundation of Oregon