

Submitter: Sarah Kester

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB690

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 690, which directs the Oregon Health Authority to conduct a comprehensive study on perinatal public health. This bill is a crucial step toward addressing the systemic barriers that affect maternal and infant health in Oregon—especially for communities that face disproportionate health disparities.

SB 690 stands out because it takes a deliberate, evidence-based approach to policymaking. Rather than jumping to conclusions or implementing piecemeal fixes, this legislation asks the Oregon Health Authority to assess the full scope of challenges facing our perinatal health system. The study will examine not just clinical outcomes, but also housing instability, behavioral health needs, substance use, and workforce gaps—reflecting a holistic understanding of the factors that shape maternal and infant well-being.

I also want to address the sunset clause, which sets an expiration date of January 2, 2027. While some may view this as a limitation, I believe it is a strength. The sunset clause ensures accountability. It creates a clear and time-bound framework: the study must be completed and reported by September 15, 2026, giving the Legislature ample time in the 2027 session to act on its findings. In doing so, it prevents bureaucratic delays and encourages timely, intentional follow-up. This built-in urgency is essential in a policy area where lives and outcomes are quite literally at stake.

SB 690 is not the final solution—it is the necessary first step. It opens the door to smarter investments, better programs, and policies that meet the real needs of Oregon families. As part of the larger “Mominibus” package, it helps lay the foundation for future legislation that can truly transform the perinatal health landscape in our state.

For all these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support SB 690.

Sincerely,

Sarah Kester
Keizer, Oregon