

OMC

Oregon Midwifery Council

5126 NE 20th Avenue • Portland OR • 97211

www.OregonMidwiferyCouncil.org

To the House Committee on Human Services—

I am writing as a representative of the Oregon Midwifery Council in support of **WIC Bills HB 2626 and HB 2639**. As care givers of pregnant, birthing, and post-partum women and their children we see the positive impact of WIC on the health and well-being of low income families. We include nutrition counseling and on-going support in our care to insure that we minimize the possibilities of pre-term and low birth weight babies. WIC is a key player in this goal. Research has consistently shown positive health outcomes, including better maternal health, longer pregnancies, fewer premature births, fewer infant deaths, and improved cognitive development in babies when they have adequate nutrition. We are fully in support of these bills because they continue to improve the lives of families in poverty. As an organization we are dedicated to bringing quality, personalized care to **all** pregnant and post-partum people and their families in OR. Food for low income families is a justice issue. These bills will further that goal. WIC addresses disparities:

- Due to historical injustices, food insecurity rates are higher among African-American, Latinx, Native American communities, and households led by single moms. WIC plays a role in addressing these disparities.
- Higher participation in rural areas: Over half (53%) of women living outside of metro/urban areas used WIC during their pregnancy, higher than in urban areas (32%).

Despite its success, over 10,000 kids in Oregon are cut off from nutrition assistance through WIC when a child turns 5 due to federal rules. Income eligibility for WIC and school meals are the same, but many kids don't start kindergarten until they're closer to 6. This gap in nutrition hurts kindergarten readiness. Oregon can close this gap for over 10,000 kids by extending WIC nutrition benefits from a child's 5th birthday through the start of kindergarten by passing **HB 2639**.

Extending nutrition benefits for moms 2 years postpartum [HB 2626](#):

We've seen the impact of feeding families nourishing food and the incredible relief they feel when they are fed well. Reducing stress creates greater health and potential for success in a family. Increasing the timeframe to 2 years would have a significant impact on well-being. Oregon should extend nutrition support for over 17,000 moms through a child's second birthday by passing HB 2626.

The Oregon Midwifery Council is grateful to support these bills as a way of improving the quality of life for over 100,000 moms and children of our great state!

Most sincerely,

Celeste Kersey, CPM, LDM

President of the Oregon Midwifery Council
