

Date February 2, 2022

TO: The Honorable Deb Patterson, Chair  
Senate Committee on Health Care

FROM: Cate Wilcox, Maternal and Child Health  
Center for Prevention and Health Promotion  
Public Health Division  
Oregon Health Authority

SUBJECT: SB 1555

Chair Patterson and members of the committee, I am Cate Wilcox, Maternal and Child Health Manager in the Public Health Division of the Oregon Health Authority (OHA). SB 1555 provides a technical fix to SB 526 of the 2019 Legislative Session.

ORS 433.301 requires OHA, in collaboration with the Department of Consumer and Business Services to design, implement and maintain a voluntary statewide program to provide universal newborn nurse home visiting service to all families of newborns residing in the state to support healthy child development and strengthen families. ORS 743A.078 also requires that these services must be covered by health benefit plans. We have been working with eight early adopter communities as the first cohort to implement this program.

SB 1555 provides technical fixes to ORS 743A.078 to clarify the requirements around payment for the services by health benefit plans. It provides OHA the ability to develop payment mechanisms, how costs will be determined and specifies that health benefit plans must cover the cost of universal newborn home visiting services in full. This fix will ensure service providers receive the full cost of providing universal newborn home visiting services to the health benefit plan members. More families will be reached which will reduce inequities in neonatal outcomes.

We know that evidence-based Maternal and Child Health Home Visiting can improve outcomes for children and parents, such as reduced maternal anxiety and depression, more positive parenting skills, safer home environments, reduced infant emergency medical care and hospitalization, and more connection to community

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resources and supports. Family Connects Oregon is the evidence-based universally offered, voluntary nurse home visiting program for parents of newborns, regardless of income or socioeconomic status, OHA is implementing. Currently, most early adopter sites are not billing health benefit plans insurance for Family Connects Oregon services due to low rates of reimbursement proposed by health benefit plans, challenging the sustainability of local implementations. Early adopter sites have expressed concern about the viability of providing newborn home visiting services if adequate reimbursement is not obtained from health benefit plans. Without sustainable funding for these programs, newborns and their families will lose access to these important health outcomes.

In summary, SB 1555 clarifies the responsibility of OHA to support local sustainability of the newborn home visiting services and of the health benefit plans in reimbursement for these services for their members.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 1555. Please feel free to contact me for additional information.