

- Good morning, Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden, and members of the committee, my name is Carrie Cohen and I am an instructor at Portland State University and a practicing lactation consultant. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2535.
- I would like to share information about doulas and the cost savings associated with doula services.
- Doulas provides emotional and physical care before, during and after child birth, providing a continuum of care
- Doulas that work with mothers in custody have specific training to provide trauma informed care, can enhance communication between the mother and care providers and assist with minimizing re-traumatization during the birth process. They also provide support when mother and infant are separated.
- If we look to other programs across the nation, utilizing partnerships with community doula organizations eliminates the cost of doula services to the Department of Corrections. Not only this, but doula care can actually DECREASE costs to the DOC and to the state.
- Doula support has been shown to reduce rates of C/S births and decrease the need for interventions during birth.
  - A MN study of birth outcomes among women in custody who delivered using doula services showed that 82% of participants had vaginal births while only 18% had C/S. Moreover, it is notable that for those giving birth for the first time, only 3% had cesareans compared to national stats at the time of 22%
  - Similar results have been observed in other prison doula programs across the nation.
- The average cost of a vaginal birth in Oregon is \$16,000. A C/S birth costs over \$26,000. Therefore there is a potential savings to the DOC of over \$10,000 by providing access to doula care.
- Additional cost savings to the state have the potential to be realized through healthier birth outcomes for the baby, especially if the infant is placed in state custody. Doula care has been shown to decrease risk of preterm deliveries, and access to parent's breastmilk reduces rates of infection and need for hospitalization.
- It is important to recognize that doula care has the potential to mitigate the unseen costs of delivering while in custody as well:
- The BORCIP was passed by the state of Oregon in 2017 and identifies the rights of children of incarcerated parents to physical and emotional care, and to a relationship with their parent. Doula care can help with the implementation of these rights
- Doula care will help support maternal/infant bonding: Smelling, touching and hearing the mother has been found to be protective against stress and pain, and assists with a healthy transition after birth.
- Doulas can also help facilitate access to the Expressions of Care program which provides free on-going assistance with the transport of breast milk from the mother to her infant which gives health benefits to baby and has also been reported to provide the mother with a sense of agency, connection to her child and focus during her sentence.

- We have an opportunity to reduce the harm associated with incarceration by providing support at a critical and vulnerable time in a person's life, both for the mother and the infant. I ask you to pass HB 2535 and ensure access to doula care while in custody.