

Submitter: Hilary Nichols

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB695

Chair Reynolds, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health,

For the record my name is Hilary Nichols and I work at a community health center in SE Portland as a clinic-based Community Organizer. My work aims to tackle health equity issues upstream, focusing on laws, policy, and regulations that make our communities sick.

It's from this perspective that I ask you to support SB 695, which will improve our state's upstream public health strategy by bolstering OHA and CCO efforts to improve access to, and coordination of, essential health and behavioral health care for pregnant and postpartum Oregonians and their babies. This focus on maternal and infant health in Oregon is urgently needed to improve outcomes and support the future population health of our state.

I want to highlight a provision of this bill allowing CCOs to coordinate care for people leaving jails and prisons. For the last two years I have been working closely with the amazing team at Oregon Prison Birth Project, which provides invaluable doula services to pregnant and postpartum women at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility, Oregon's only women's prison. While they are doing incredible work, they encounter countless systemic barriers to serving their clients, including lack of appropriate or comprehensive prenatal healthcare, lack of housing for moms post-release, and lack of support for lactation. If our CCOs can implement care coordination benefits for our community residing in correctional facilities, we will become a national leader in humane healthcare for this population that is systematically forgotten.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide my testimony, and thank you for your service to make a healthier Oregon.