



## SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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### NEWS RELEASE

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#### **Legislation will raise awareness of maternal mental health concerns** *HB 2235 will improve outreach around depression and pregnancy*

SALEM – A bill that will require the Oregon Health Authority to give health care providers materials and training about maternal mental health passed in the Senate this morning. House Bill 2235 is the top legislative priority for a work group established by the Legislature in 2009 to look at ways to improve systems and services for maternal mental health care in Oregon.

“By requiring hospitals and health care providers who serve pregnant women to offer resources, we will be better able to identify and help women who are suffering from depression,” said Senate Majority Leader Diane Rosenbaum (D-Portland), the co-chair of the Oregon Women’s Health and Wellness Alliance. “Nearly a quarter of women say they experience some feelings of depression while pregnant or soon after. We must do a better job helping these women address their symptoms and we must help providers better understand and assess the needs of their patients. This is a significant piece of legislation that will help women in Oregon.”

In Oregon, nearly one in four of new mothers report symptoms of depression during or after pregnancy. Early recognition of risk factors and symptoms can reduce adverse health outcomes for both mother and child, but most women with pregnancy and post partum depression are never identified and or treated. Reliable, evidence- based methods exist for culturally competent risk evaluation, screening, and treatment, and can be adopted and utilized by Oregon care providers.

“There is a serious and often misunderstood need to make sure that pregnant and recently pregnant women receive mental health care services,” said Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson (D-Gresham), a retired public health nurse. “Proactively offering this information will help reduce the shame and stigma that prevents patients from asking for help while empowering them to initiate treatment.”

HB 2235 is a priority bill of the Oregon Women’s Health and Wellness Alliance and was championed in the House by Representative Carolyn Tomei (D-Milwaukie). The bill now goes to the Governor for his signature.

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