

Sarah Tewhey  
Seal Cove, Maine  
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Written testimony for: LD 865 - An Act to Require MaineCare to Reimburse for Lactation Services in the Homes of Eligible Persons

Dear members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony. My name is Sarah Tewhey and I am a doula in Hancock County as well as the current Chair of the Maine Doula Coalition. I am writing in support of LD865.

As a doula in a rural area of Maine I work with many families who have been disproportionately impacted by the challenges the state faces in maintaining adequate rural maternity care, which includes lactation and infant feeding support. In my area, not all hospital systems have an IBCLC on staff or are able to offer easily accessible outpatient IBCLC support to the families they serve. This can leave rural new families who need the expertise of an IBCLC with limited access to the care they need. In the absence of this care, I often refer my clients to independent IBCLCs, who are currently an out of pocket expense. For individuals who receive MaineCare, this additional expense can sometimes prohibit access to services.

In my area of Hancock County we have several excellent, experienced independent IBCLCs who provide expertise to new families facing lactation issues. These professionals work in independent offices and often travel for home-visits. These independent IBCLCs have the same training as our hospital-based IBCLCs and often have more flexibility to attend to the specific logistic needs of our rural families. However, at this time MaineCare does not provide coverage for their services. The passage of LD865 would simply create a system in which all IBCLC's in Maine, both hospital-based and independent are able to serve our MaineCare babies. This very simple change would have a real impact on access to care for rural parents and their infants who need additional help with lactation. For this reason, I urge you to vote in favor of LD865

Thank you so much for your time.

Sarah Tewhey  
Chair, Maine Doula Coalition