

Dear Chair Ingwersen, Chair Meyer, and distinguished Members of the Joint Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Chantel Biron and I am a Certified Lactation Counselor (CLC), certified by the Academy of Lactation Policy and Practice. I currently live in Greene, Maine. I would like to share my thoughts on HP 551/LD 865 – relating to MaineCare coverage of lactation support services. I am writing to request that the language be amended and clarified to require reimbursement of “consultants or counselors who are certified by a national organization that provides a national certification program in lactation consulting or counseling.” Currently, Section 2 of the proposed bill identifies that only services provided by International Board-Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) should be covered by MaineCare, but Section 1 of the proposed bill uses the preferred language of nationally certified consultants or counselors. I am asking that the language of Section 1, which is inclusive of both IBCLCs and CLCs, be used throughout all sections of the proposed bill.

I work in Maine at Central Maine Pediatrics and have been in this field for 6 years. In my work as a CLC, I provide lactation support for breastfeeding families including, making individualized assessments and plans to address issues experienced during breastfeeding, making referrals, if needed, to health care providers, and providing follow-up care to the families I work with. I also run a weekly Breastfeeding Support Group. As of March 14, 2025, there are 454 CLCs providing professional lactation support services in the state. There are just 96 IBCLCs in Maine as of February 12, 2025. Both types of professionals are critically important in support Maine families on their breastfeeding journeys.

Research has demonstrated that lactation support providers have a positive effect on breastfeeding initiation and continuation rates, particularly when a lactation support provider lives in, or is from, the same race and ethnic background as the individual seeking support. Lactation support must be covered by health insurance in order to allow equitable access to all families in Maine. Most families cannot afford to pay out of pocket to see a lactation support professional, especially when, more often than not, more than one visit is required in order to address breastfeeding concerns. For these reasons, I am asking the Committee to consider the amendment mentioned above, in order for lactation support services provided by both CLCs and IBCLCs be covered by MaineCare.

Thank you for your time, and thank you to the bill sponsor, Representative Boyer, for her work on such important legislation. We hope that you understand the need for this change.

Sincerely,
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