

April 17th, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Honorable Members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Lucy Nelson, and I am a resident of Lisbon Falls, Maine. I am here today in support of LD 1523, An Act to Improve Perinatal Care Through Expanded Access to Doula Services. I am a Certified Labor Doula, and I've seen firsthand the profound impact that doula care can have on the birthing experience.

I support LD 1523 because:

Benefits of Doulas:

I have been a practicing doula for 10 years and have assisted in over 200 births. From my experience, I know how critical it is for people to have access to a doula. One of the most powerful aspects of doula care is the emotional and physical support tailored to the specific needs of the birthing person. I've seen clients and their partners—who were initially anxious about their birth—find calm and empowerment through continuous support during labor, knowing they had an advocate at their side.

Having a doula positively affects the birth experience in many ways. I've worked with clients who, after having a doula, reported feeling more confident and informed about their birth choices. I've also supported families through complex birth situations, helping them navigate difficult decisions with respect and understanding.

The services I provide, such as continuous emotional support, pain management assistance, and guidance throughout the birth process, are unique and can only be provided by a doula. These services complement the medical care the birthing person receives, leading to better overall outcomes.

The Landscape of Perinatal Care in Maine:

I've witnessed why doula care is a necessary part of the perinatal care landscape here in Maine. The reality is that many people still face barriers to accessing the support they need during pregnancy and childbirth. The healthcare system can feel overwhelming, and too often, individuals don't receive the continuous, personalized care that a doula can provide. This lack of support can result in a less positive birth experience. With proper access to doula services, more people are likely to experience a birth that is not only physically safer but also emotionally fulfilling.

Barriers to Access:

Right now, because doula care isn't covered by insurance, it's out of reach for most families, especially those from low-income backgrounds. Making doula care accessible through MaineCare is incredibly important because it would allow more families to benefit from the emotional, physical, and informational support that doulas provide. I've seen firsthand how the inability to pay for a doula can be a huge barrier for families who would benefit most from this support. I've worked with families who wanted to hire a doula but simply couldn't afford the cost, missing out on the benefits of continuous, personalized care during labor.

If MaineCare covered doula services, it wouldn't just make care more accessible—it would also help stabilize and grow the doula workforce. As demand for doulas increases, we need to ensure that we have enough qualified doulas to meet that demand and provide high-quality, culturally competent care to all families in Maine, no matter their income.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I sincerely hope you will vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 1523 so that all families in Maine have access to the support they need during one of the most significant moments of their lives.

Thank you,

Lucy Nelson