

Anne M. Gallaudet  
Scarborough, Maine

April 17, 2025

Re: LD 1523, An Act to Improve Perinatal Care through Expanded Access to Doula Services

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

I appreciate this opportunity to address you on this important matter. My name is Anne Gallaudet. I am a resident of Scarborough, Maine. I am writing in support of LD 1523.

I support this bill because Maine hospitals are experiencing extensive financial strain. Some hospitals have closed entirely; others, although still operating, have closed their birthing units. The loss of birthing units has occurred disproportionately in rural areas and also had disparate impact on blacks and indigenous pregnant people. The 11<sup>th</sup> obstetrics unit will be closing in Maine since 2015, the majority of which, as already notes, are in rural areas. As a result, already underserved pregnant people find they must drive up to three hours to receive prenatal or postpartum care or birth their baby. Allowing reimbursement for doulas under MaineCare to provide perinatal care is an important tool to help address this crisis in maternity care which Maine is experiencing.

Access to high quality care by doulas through MaineCare will undoubtedly have a positive impact on improving prenatal and postpartum mental and physical health and birth outcomes, reduce infant mortality rates and do so particularly for traditionally underserved people. I also support the defined range of doula services this bill covers to ensure pregnant people covered by MaineCare get at least the minimal care they need to address their health during the perinatal period. Only with serious efforts like this to address the inadequacies in health care received by Maine-Care eligible pregnant people can we really impact Maine's perinatal health care crisis.

By the end of 2024, 18 states along with Washington, DC have implemented Medicaid coverage for doula care. Nine more states are in the process of implementing Medicaid coverage for doula care. These states are a collection of red, purple and blue states.

<https://www.badoulatraining.org/blog/state-of-the-states-efforts-to-expand-access-to-doula-care-in-medicaid-and-private-insurance> This is an area ripe for bipartisan support. Access to health care by providing doula services contributes to a positive prenatal, birthing and postpartum experience for pregnant people, and increases the chances a healthy baby is born.

My older daughter used a doula, along with her obstetrician, for both her pregnancies for perinatal care and raved about her experience. Indeed, with respect to her second child, she had the baby at home in 2016 with the help of only the doula and her husband. She felt the doula provided excellent emotional and educational support during the whole perinatal period, had supportive ideas for resolving physical issues that came up while pregnant, and aptly handled the birthing experience.

I urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 1523.

Anne Gallaudet,  
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