

Mel Steinberg
Bar Harbor, Maine
April 17, 2025

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

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee. My name is Mel Steinberg. I am a resident of Bar Harbor, a mom, and a postpartum doula. I am writing in support of **LD 1523 *An Act to Improve Perinatal Care Through Expanded Access to Doula Services***.

I support **LD 1523** because I know from firsthand experience how important and transformative a doula's support can be during pregnancy, birth, and postpartum. Immediately after my own birth, my doula was one of the few people that I felt safe inviting into my postpartum space during a challenging and vulnerable time. She helped my family navigate early parenthood and an emergency hospitalization with knowledge, advocacy, compassion, and tenderness. When I look back on those very early postpartum days and weeks, I see the ways that my doula held me and my family and stood by us through experiences that could be remembered as traumatic had we not had someone so skilled and caring by our side. Despite the challenges we experienced, I entered motherhood feeling safe, cared for, and confident because of our doula's support.

In my own work as a postpartum doula over the last three years, I have had the opportunity to care for families in their homes days (and sometimes hours) after giving birth. I work to make my clients feel safe and cared for as they navigate their new world, just as my doula did for me. Doulas occupy a liminal space for many people experiencing pregnancy, birth, and postpartum. They hold hands, offer advocacy and support, and play a unique and vital role in their clients' experiences.

I believe that this kind of care and support should be available to all who wish to access it. Care that has been shown to improve birth experiences and outcomes should not be limited to those who can afford to pay out-of-pocket for such services. Those who are providing this care should not have to choose between doing the work that they love and making a living wage. Having MaineCare cover doula services would drastically improve access to a valuable resource and would work toward growing and stabilizing that resource. I hope to provide caring and comprehensive postpartum support to members of my community for many years to come, and I hope that LD 1523 will help to widen the scope of who is able to access the care of doulas in my community and across the state.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I hope you will vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 1523.

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