

Ellen DaCorte  
Somesville, Maine

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Dear 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 Ellen DaCorte, and I am a Registered Nurse with 29 years of experience, including the past 27 years as a clinical obstetrical nurse at a rural hospital in Maine. I am here today to speak in strong support of LD 1523.

Throughout my career, I have had the privilege of supporting countless low-risk births and delivering patient-centered care to families during one of the most vulnerable and transformative times of their lives. However, I am deeply concerned about the growing crisis we are facing in maternal health care—particularly in our rural communities.

Since 2000, Maine has seen 12 hospitals shut down their labor and delivery services, with two more hospitals recently announcing plans to close theirs. That brings the total to 14 closures over the past 25 years—making 2025 the year with the highest number of announced closures to date. This fact is not just unfortunate—but dangerous. They represent a systemic failure that puts pregnant people and their unborn newborns at unnecessary risk. Families are being forced to travel farther to receive care, often in stressful or even unsafe conditions. This lack of access jeopardizes not only physical health outcomes, but the emotional and mental well-being of our perinatal patients.

This is why LD 1523 is so critically important. Doulas are essential members of the maternal care team. They offer continuous, individualized, culturally competent care that improves outcomes for both mothers and babies. Numerous studies have shown that doula support reduces the likelihood of cesarean sections, shortens labor, increases maternal satisfaction, and improves breastfeeding success. Perhaps most importantly, doulas provide consistent emotional support—something that cannot be overstated during the perinatal period.

In our rural community, where provider shortages and facility closures are already affecting access to care, doulas play a vital role in bridging the gaps. They aren't a luxury—they're essential. I've witnessed the compassionate, dedicated support doulas offer, having worked alongside many in the hospital setting over the years. Now more than ever, those in the perinatal period need their presence and care.

I urge you to support LD 1523. The people of Maine, especially those in rural and underserved communities, deserve a maternal health system that supports them holistically. This bill is a critical step toward ensuring that every person giving birth in Maine receives the safe, respectful, and supportive care they need.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD1523. Thank you!

Sincerely,  
Ellen DaCorte, RN