

Noami Brautigam  
Monroe  
LD 1523

April 17th, 2025

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

My name is Noami Brautigam, I am a resident of Monroe and I am here today in support of LD 1523 An Act to Improve Perinatal Care Through Expanded Access to Doula Services. I have given birth twice in the past five years and experienced first hand the night and day difference between birthing a baby with and without doula care.

In 2020 I transferred from a home birth to Northern Light Hospital in Ellsworth due to premature rupture of membranes (or in layperson terms, my water broke before labor started) and a slowly progressing labor. Upon being admitted to the hospital with both myself and the baby in 100% stable condition, I was dehumanized and violated in countless ways including a forced cervical exam, a coerced caesarean with no explanation of the surgery including its risks, and verbal abuse on the operating table. Though both my baby and I presented to the hospital with no immediately threatening conditions, the OB on call did not take time to look me in the eye and treat me like a human being, making the birth of my firstborn the most traumatic day of my life. As a direct result of this obstetric violence, I struggled with PTSD and postpartum depression for much of the first two years of my child's life.

Though the birth of my second child in 2022 at the Mount Desert Island Hospital, medically looked almost identical (premature rupture of membranes, slow labor, caesarean), my partner and I hired a doula and it made the WORLD of difference. Our doula provided comprehensive care, from supporting me in advocating to medical staff my specific needs ahead of time, to continuous support the 24 hours leading up to the birth - and notably my doula was by my side the entire time I was in the operating room. All of this prenatal and birth support as well as postpartum follow ups provided me the opportunity for a drastically improved postpartum mental health outcome.

Every birthing person should have access to a dignified birth experience. Period. And also, every birthing person should have access to a dignified birth experience to set them up to be the most resourced parent they can be. In my opinion doulas are the largest factor in achieving this goal.

38% of births in Maine are covered by MaineCare (including both of mine), yet many families can't afford to pay for a doula to provide continuous care. Black, Indigenous and rural birthing people face higher rates of birth complications, postpartum depression and maternal mortality. We know doulas are a proven solution to better birth outcomes. It is time we institutionalize doula care access for all birthing people in Maine.

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

Thank you,  
Noami Brautigam