

Testimony in Support of LD 1523: An Act to Provide MaineCare Coverage for Doula Services

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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 Gina Caruso-Rissing; I'm a resident of Southwest Harbor, ME and mother of two little girls, ages 2 years and 3 weeks. I am writing today in strong support of LD 1523.

This bill is an important step toward improving maternal and infant health outcomes across our state. Doula care has been consistently shown to reduce rates of cesarean birth, shorten labor, increase breastfeeding success, and improve the overall birth experience for families. Doulas offer nonclinical, culturally appropriate, and continuous physical, emotional, and informational support throughout pregnancy, birth, and the postpartum period.

I was fortunate enough to be able to pay out of pocket for doula support during my pregnancies, which ended up being high-risk due to preeclampsia. The care I received from my doulas was invaluable. They offered steady emotional grounding during uncertain moments and helped me navigate complex decisions. Their presence made an enormous difference—not only during labor but throughout the postpartum period, when support is often scarce and deeply needed.

I can say from personal experience that doula care improves outcomes in both quantifiable ways and in ways that are difficult to quantify but deeply felt. And yet, this kind of support is currently only accessible to those who can afford to pay privately. LD 1523 would help correct this inequity by requiring MaineCare to reimburse for doula services, expanding access to this vital support for families who need it most. Given the disparities in birth outcomes that persist across racial, geographic, and economic lines, expanding access to doulas is not just a healthcare issue—it's a matter of justice.

Investing in doulas is a cost-effective, evidence-based way to improve outcomes for parents and babies alike. I urge the committee to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 1523 and help make Maine a state where all families—regardless of income—can access the support they deserve during one of life's most vulnerable and transformative times.

Thank you for your time and for your consideration of this critical bill.

Sincerely,
Gina Caruso-Rissing