

Sylvie Piquet
Portland, Maine
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Dear Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Honorable Members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

Thank you for taking the time to consider my testimony. I am writing in strong support of LD 1523, which will strengthen access to supportive health care for pregnant and birthing people across our state. When you are pregnant and in labor you are vulnerable to a complex system that is typically foreign to anyone until they are in that moment. In 2024, the Commonwealth Fund reports "US maternal mortality rate continues to far exceed those of other high-income nations". Doula care and services are a critical factor to countering Maine's staggering statistic of an average of 870 maternal deaths annually (from 2018 to 2021, according to March of Dimes). The maternal mortality rate increases dramatically for marginalized identities and now more than ever Maine's most vulnerable (women and people who are Black, Indigenous, Latina and living in poverty) need access to support for their healthcare.

I am grateful I was able to access doula services for my pregnancy and birth. Even though I had access to prenatal care and am a native English speaker, the experience of labor and delivery in the hospital setting was disorienting and felt foreign. My doula met with me in advance to make sure I was well supported and had access to resources I needed in the prenatal period that contributed to a healthier birth. In the days of early labor my doula supported me so I avoided taking unnecessary trips to the hospital before it was time to be admitted. Once the night came, my doula kept me and my spouse calm and helped us navigate parking, admittance, breathing and supported me to be as calm as possible while transitioning into a new environment with foreign routines. Avoiding unnecessary stress contributes to a healthier, smoother delivery and birth. Our doula helped translate some of the medical terms to laymen's terms for decisions we had to make. Doula services should not be a privilege. For people bringing life into this world - an imperative factor of Maine's economy not to mention the human race - support for healthier deliveries for the mother (birthing person) and child should be accessible regardless of race, wealth, or nationality.

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

Grateful for the work you do,

Sylvie Piquet