



Grandmothers For Reproductive Rights

PO Box 204
Portland, ME 04112

info@grrnow.org
www.grrnow.org

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

My name is Cait Vaughan and I am testimony on behalf of my employer, Grandmothers for Reproductive Rights (GRR!), and the more than 600 Maine residents we represent, in support of **LD 1523, An Act to Improve Perinatal Care Through Expanded Access to Doula Services**. GRR! is a grassroots organization that amplifies the voices and status of grandmothers and elders who work intergenerationally, through grassroots education, advocacy, and community-centered initiatives to secure access to sexual and reproductive health, rights, and justice for present and future generations.

As an organization applying a Reproductive Justice framework to all we do, GRR! is deeply concerned about the mortality and morbidity crises facing birthing people throughout the United States, and in Maine. The brunt of these crises are borne by Black, Brown, Indigenous and immigrant women, as well as poor birthing folks of any background. Doulas deploy a person-centered, holistic, and community-based care model to support birthing people and their families in navigating the complex systems, decision points, emotions, and life changes associated with carrying a pregnancy to term, giving birth, and postpartum healing while raising newborns. Doulas also educate birthing parents on their rights as patients, their care options, and serve as steady sounding boards during acute moments when unexpected interventions become necessary. This community-based and peer-led intervention has been cited as increasing the likelihood of birthers' satisfaction with their labor experience, sometimes shortened labor times, decreasing cesarean rates, and positively impacting later perceptions and meaning-making of various birth traumas. Doulas are also postpartum "first responders" who both equip birthing people and their loved ones to identify and respond to warning signs in the postpartum period, and are also trained to notice the signs and facilitate access to care that saves lives who would have otherwise been lost to postpartum preeclampsia, postpartum psychosis, and other life-threatening conditions.

The deeply personalized and steady care that doulas provide should not be a luxury for the few who can afford to pay out-of-pocket. Nor should doulas be expected to labor out of love for clients, while struggling to make ends meet for their own households. MaineCare coverage for doula services is an important step forward this body can take to put more resources toward the communities bearing the brunt of disparities in perinatal health outcomes. LD 1523 accomplishes two incredible things at once, by increasing access to doula services for marginalized Mainers, while at the same time bolstering the sustainability and longevity of this critical care workforce.

In this moment, we need to be expanding the availability of support services for pregnant Mainers, especially those on the margins. We must make this investment in our perinatal health infrastructure. GRR! strongly urges you to vote Ought To Pass on LD 1523.

Thank you for your time,

Caitlin Vaughan

Cait Vaughan, Director of Programs & Outreach

Grandmothers for Reproductive Rights (GRR!) works, through education and advocacy, to secure access to sexual & reproductive health, rights & justice for present & future generations.