

Holly Khiel  
Surry  
LD 1523

Holly Khiel, Surry

April 17th, 2025

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

My name is Holly Khiel. I'm a resident of Surry and a mother to a 2.5 year old. I'm writing in support of LD 1523, An Act to Improve Perinatal Care Through Expanded Access to Doula Services.

When I gave birth in 2022, I benefitted immensely from the presence of a doula. As an autistic person with sensory sensitivities only diagnosed recently, I've experienced confusing difficulty in medical settings my whole life, which has resulted in chronic and sometimes debilitating panic and anxiety (which, until recently, I just thought was just normal). If I had not had a doula with me and my husband helping us understand our options, facilitating our decision-making process with compassion, and advocating for us with medical staff, I feel certain those three days (and postpartum) would have been painful and confusing for me like so many past health events in my life. Instead, because I had a doula, it was painful but meaningful, and ultimately a positive and affirming experience.

It's no secret that our medical system is dysfunctional at best. Managed care creates inequities that disproportionately impact women and trans people, neurodivergent and disabled people, and black and indigenous people. Creating affordable access (via MaineCare coverage) to doula services is one simple step this committee can take in the direction of making health care in Maine more equitable. Many rural Mainers have to travel very far to get to the nearest hospital, and having a doula available during birth is one way to help make that experience more humane & generally more positive for birthing people. Such an uncomplicated win is hard to come by these days, and I hope this committee sees the opportunity it has (during some tough socio-political times) to provide support to birthing people who need it by voting "Ought to Pass" on LD 1523.

Thank you for hearing & considering my testimony, and for your work on this issue.

Sincerely,  
Holly Khiel