



April 16, 2025

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

My name is Meg Whithed, and I am testifying today on behalf of the Maine Doula Coalition in support of ***LD 1523, An Act to Improve Perinatal Care Through Expanded Access to Doula Services***. The Maine Doula Coalition is a statewide, volunteer-led organization committed to expanding access to doula services and building a sustainable doula workforce.

Doulas are trained, **non-medical** professionals who provide continuous emotional, informational, and physical support throughout pregnancy, labor, and postpartum. Doula services can include prenatal and postpartum education and home visits, continuous labor support, support for pregnancy or infant loss, lactation support, warm referrals to community resources, and providing spiritually and culturally congruent care. Because we build close, sustained relationships with clients, doulas are uniquely positioned to witness the full spectrum of challenges families face and provide continuous, personalized care.

Inequitable access to doula support falls heaviest on rural, low-income and Black, Brown, Indigenous and immigrant birthing folks and their families. As outlined in MDC's recently published [Maine Doula Workforce Assessment](#), Maine is facing significant strain on its perinatal care infrastructure, including: workforce shortages, mounting hospital OB unit closures, long travel times to receive care, geographic and racial health disparities, and a lack of culturally competent care models.

**Findings from the 2023 Maine Doula Workforce Assessment shed light on the urgency of expanding MaineCare coverage to ensure the sustainability and growth of Maine's doula workforce:**

- **More than 53%** of doulas surveyed had served MaineCare enrollees and/or uninsured clients in the past.
- **28.8%** of doulas surveyed expressed they work with families who are more affluent, middle and upper class. Many indicated that this is because these individuals can afford their services.
- **68.9%** of doula respondents reported serving a family for free at some point in their career.

These findings reflect a system in which doulas are filling critical care gaps but lack adequate infrastructure or support to do so sustainably. All of this, combined with ongoing hospital closures that constantly shift the landscape of care, leads to high rates of burnout and financial instability among a workforce that is supporting families with increasingly constrained choice around perinatal care.



Lack of MaineCare coverage also means those most hard hit by disparities in health outcomes are also the \*least\* likely to be able to access the support of a doula.

**While doulas are non-clinical care providers, we are also often the first line of contact for families when questions or concerns arise.**

Expansion of MaineCare coverage for doula services is a critical step toward addressing a much broader set of systemic challenges facing birthing people and families in Maine. The Maine Doula Coalition urges you to vote Ought To Pass on LD 1523.

Sincerely,

Meg Whithed  
[Maine Doula Coalition](#)