

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Olivia Pennington, and I live in Portland, ME. I am a full-spectrum doula, supporting people throughout their reproductive journeys, including pregnancy & birth. I am here today to urge you to support LD 1523 An Act to Improve Perinatal Care Through Expanded Access to Doula Services.

I have seen firsthand the impact that doula care can have on a birthing person's experience. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine reported that the continuous presence of a doula during pregnancy is [one of the most effective tools to improve labor and delivery outcomes](#).

Recently, I supported a new mom through an experience with postpartum preeclampsia. Postpartum preeclampsia a rare but serious postpartum complication that can cause stroke, seizures, and even death. When she called me and told me the symptoms she had been experiencing, I knew we had to make our way to the OB Emergency Department as soon as possible.

When a new mom is hospitalized after having given birth, hospitals will not re-admit the newborn as a patient, meaning there is no possibility of having the baby in the nursery. When a parent is undergoing treatment for postpartum preeclampsia, they are on medication that renders them unable to care for their newborn. The mom I was working with is a widow, with no family in the area. She just recently moved to Maine and has no friends or community in the area. She needed someone to stay in the hospital with her for the full 48 hours to care for her baby. Without access to a doula, she would have refused admission to the hospital. Without access to a doula, she could have died. Leaving her two children orphaned.

Everyone deserves access to this care, no matter how much money they make. Inequalities in insurance coverage means that access to lifesaving healthcare has become dependent on a person's income level. This means that poor women, women of color, immigrants, and other marginalized people are less likely to have access to doula services, and therefore more likely to have poor outcomes in their birthing experience.

Doulas save lives. Having state-funded insurance should not prevent someone from receiving lifesaving care.

I urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 1523.