

Kathryn Norgang
Portland
LD 376

Good afternoon,

My name is Kate Norgang, MSN-Ed., RN. I am a nurse working for Maine's health care system, an educator, and a maternal and public health worker with 23 years of experience caring for women and children.

I also became a mother myself within the past year, and through this experience I learned first-hand how vulnerable families are during pregnancy, delivery, and aftercare.

I was fortunate to be well cared for by an interprofessional team; some of this was available through Maine's healthcare system. Some I had to seek out and pay for, and I am privileged to do this. It truly made a difference when I experienced a sudden medical emergency, and the aftermath of acclimating to life as a new mom while recovering.

We are now thriving, only because we were able to draw upon a variety of support needed. Doula care, in addition to midwifery care, truly made the difference in keeping my family whole and healthy.

Doulas are a unique cadre of care professionals who work within the healthcare team to promote comfort, empowerment, and resilience among birthing people and their families. They are skilled, insightful, collaborative, and can act as a safety net-something that is essential in a time when our health care system is overstretched.

Every birthing person and family deserves access to the care doulas provide during pregnancy, delivery, and postpartum. MaineCare reimbursement for these services would allow more equitable access, and also the network of doula care to become more stable, which is key to ensuring these services will continue to exist.

In my current role working with underserved populations in Maine (rural, New Mainer migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking families, pregnant people in recovery, and those experiencing unstable housing), I have seen first-hand the impact that doula care can provide. We would love to connect every person birthing alone in Maine, every person struggling to make their healthcare appointments, every person who is living in isolation, fear and overwhelm, with a doula. However, to do this there must be a pathway for service reimbursement.

I urge you to pass this essential bill, LD 376 - An Act to Improve Maternal and Infant Health Outcomes Through Doula Care, immediately. Let's give all people and families in Maine the evidenced based, crucial support needed for a healthy start with their new baby.