

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee of Health and Human Services, my name is Hannah Lord, and I live in Portland. I am writing to urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 1523 An Act to Improve Perinatal Care Through Expanded Access to Doula Services.

I am the former owner of Peony Doula Co., LLC which served over one hundred families throughout New England. For a decade I served our community as a Certified Full Spectrum Doula working closely in the homes of families in some of their most vulnerable moments during their pregnancy, birth and postpartum experiences. Years into my work as a doula I also trained to be a Certified Lactation Counselor and Certified Childbirth Educator.

My first five years as a doula I provided my care to clients completely unpaid as a volunteer. I loved this work so much that I decided to turn it into a business in 2019. I attempted to balance paid doula work with unpaid doula work, offering a sliding scale. I made a promise to never turn anyone away. I knew how valuable this care was to pregnant people. Many times the clients who needed me most were the ones who couldn't otherwise afford a doula. I needed to take both paid and unpaid clients so this work could be financially sustainable, but I ended up taking on too many clients. Sleep deprivation took over and my health really took a toll. Unfortunately, my love and passion for reproductive health wasn't enough to sustain me long term.

This work asks you to sacrifice so much of your life. You are on-call at all times and ready to go. You don't know how long a birth may take. It could be days of very little sleep and you're barely able to get nutrition in. You have no idea if multiple clients will have babies back to back or if a baby will be born earlier than expected. My experience being around such intimate moments in clients' lives was also emotional and I even witnessed trauma. Doulas need space to process for their own mental health, but that's really hard when the work never ends. As we know, the intensity of care work is often not seen and invisible. I am a single mom and when I reflect on my last five years as a full time doula, there's a lot of sadness around the times I missed special moments with my son. I was so busy as a doula while his grandmother took care of him.

I am here today because of my grief that doula work wouldn't be my forever career. I know in my heart this bill gives hope that the doulas that come after me will have a chance at a more sustainable career than I had.

For these reasons, and many more, I urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 1523.

Thank you for your time.

In appreciation,

Hannah Lord

Portland