

May 1, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you Committee members for your time this morning. I am passionate about this topic and you will likely hear that passion in my voice today.

I support LD 1357, An Act To Require Private Insurance Coverage for Postpartum Care because I'm a mom and I have given birth twice. A single 6 week checkup with a medical provider is not enough. After the birth of my second daughter, I had severe anxiety that I managed on my own but often felt alone and scared, even though I had a supportive husband and friends. We need to provide new mothers with more resources and that's what this bill is asking for. In 2016, after the birth of my second daughter, I sought pelvic floor physical therapy to address urinary incontinence. Just to paint a picture for you, I could not turn on the shower without peeing my pants, and so my OB Doctor referred me to a pelvic floor physical therapist. That's when my recovery but also the battle began. I held private insurance through Blue Cross and Blue Shield ("BCBS") and my claims for this type of physical therapy were initially denied. I called Blue Cross and Blue Shield and asked them to send me the policy paperwork that showed where this type of care was not covered. Once I received the paperwork, I was able to read and research the paperwork. It said "may not be covered," and so I filed an appeal and then reluctantly BCBS approved my claim. I was allowed 12 visits in a 36 month period. **This same plan allowed me to go to the chiropractor 30 times every 12 months.** Needless to say, 12 visits wasn't enough for me. I needed more time and more therapy and for that I have paid out of pocket. At this point thousands of dollars. It's 2021, let's start sending the message to women that we understand the enormity of childbirth and we're here to help them heal after birth.

In my work, I have the pleasure of working with moms-to-be and new moms and the stories that I just told you about myself are abundant among moms. So many women struggle with anxiety, pelvic pain, urinary incontinence, pain with sex and the list goes on. Insurance coverage is hard to navigate or care isn't covered at all and many women put off care because of financial reasons. My mother, who is in her 70s and many other mothers in that generation are dealing with these issues too, because they never got the help they needed after childbirth. Let's stop the cycle now of women being physically and emotionally hurt during childbirth and feeling ashamed or scared about it for most of their lives. Moms in that position don't have the best footing for raising their children. This isn't just a woman's problem, this is a community, village, and world problem. We need strong mothers.

Sincerely,  
Michelle Boyer  
Cape Elizabeth