

To Whom It May Concern,

5/4/21

I support LD 1357, An Act to Require Private Insurance Coverage for Postpartum Care. Birthgivers need additional support after childbirth and this bill would have an enormous impact on Maine families. One single week checkup post delivery is not enough. Postpartum depression, Pelvic Floor Dysfunction and Anxiety are just a few of the many issues that can affect birth givers in the postpartum period. With this bill, birthgivers can have access to the specific care they need to thrive and flourish after the birth of a baby.

I gave birth to my first child in November of 2016. After a vaginal birth, my medical care included my hospital stay for two days, then a checkup by my OB-GYN 6 weeks after the birth. I had stitches, lots of discomfort breastfeeding, and many questions about my changed body and my newborn. I didn't know whether my pain and discomfort were normal and whether there was something I could do about it. I was checked by my OB-GYN at 6 weeks who cleared me for all activity. I was fatigued, anxious and experiencing urinary incontinence. This was all chalked up as a rite of passage to becoming a mother.

I had my second child in October 2020, and had a much better experience thanks to the thoughtful and intentional care route I chose. I had a home birth and was under the care of a Licensed Midwife. I had another vaginal birth. However, my midwife came to check in with me and my newborn three times within the first week postpartum. I didn't have to leave the house for a newborn checkup as she was able to do that in my bedroom. She checked in with my physical and mental wellbeing, insisted on a strict rest and ensured I was receiving proper nourishment for baby and me. Breastfeeding was uncomfortable, but since my appointments were one hour and, in my home, she was there to correct the breastfeeding position that made a huge difference with my discomfort. She then came back at week one, week two, four and six postpartum. She also encouraged me to have a pelvic floor checkup with a pelvic floor physical therapist, discussed contraception and other important things to look out for after our time together, like mastitis.

I saw the pelvic floor PT, who discovered that I have a prolapsed bladder, and that was probably the case after my first child, as I experienced urinary incontinence then. Yet, my first provider didn't check for that. Had I restricted certain activity after my first child, my case might have not been as severe. Since seeing my PT, I have not experienced any more incontinence. When I felt any pain she was able to assign exercise to ease the pain. She also referred me to her acupuncturist who has changed my life, reducing pain and stress with her care.

After my recent birth experience, I am feeling great. My mental health is better than it's ever been, my body feels healthy and I have a lot of energy. Choosing these postpartum care providers has shaped a positive experience and healthy postpartum recovery for me.

In order to receive this individualized care, I paid completely out of pocket. That means, in order to feel as great, cared for, supported and as healthy as I do postpartum, I have paid close to \$6,000. My insurance company would not share the cost.

I feel very fortunate I was able to pay for this, but as though I was robbed of such a good experience with my first child, and want ensure this type of care for future pregnancies. Access to this type of care should be available to all. If we can prevent adverse effects in postpartum with these resources, insurance companies should help share the cost of this care.

Sincerely,

Amy Marchessault

Topsham, Maine