

Testimony Regarding Defining a Doula in statute

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Support of SB 1, An Act Equalizing Comprehensive Access to Mental, Behavioral, and Physical Health Care in Response to the Pandemic

Dear Senator Daugherty Abrams, Representative Steinberg, and Members of the Public Health Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly,

My name is Sarah Ganong and I'm a resident of Hartford, Connecticut. I support of S.B. No. 1, An Act Equalizing Comprehensive Access to Mental, Behavioral and Physical Health Care in Response to the Pandemic. Thank you for raising this important bill.

This policy proposal is crucial to doulas in Connecticut. Title protection is crucial and provides stronger identity and credibility, and prevents misrepresentation of the profession. A doula is a non-medical professional trained in childbirth who provides emotional, physical, and informational support to a person who is expecting, is experiencing labor, or has recently given birth. A doula's purpose is to help people have safe, memorable, and empowering birthing experiences.

Regardless of a person's income or zip code, pregnant individuals should have access to services that impact their health outcomes, including doulas. As a Hartford resident, I know many of my neighbors in my community face barriers to accessing all kinds of healthcare, including around birthing experiences. A doula can help make individuals more comfortable, provide more personalized experiences, and advocate for individuals giving birth -- all improving outcomes for the new baby as well.

Among high-income countries, the United States consistently faces the worst rate of pregnancy/childbirth-related deaths. Connecticut sees substantial and persistent disparities in maternal deaths by race and ethnicity. Black women are three to four times as likely to die during or related to pregnancy than white women, regardless of socioeconomic status. Increasing equitable access to doula care services, especially in under-resourced communities, has been shown to improve outcomes for both mothers and newborns. Doulas and the care they provide can improve these outcomes.

I respectfully recommend the following: Lines 204-207 reflect a "doula" means a trained, nonmedical professional who provides physical, emotional, and informational support to a pregnant person before, during, and after birth, in person or virtually.

Lastly, **I commend the efforts of the study** to determine whether the Department of Public Health should establish a state certification process by which a person can be certified as a state doula to ensure no doula be barred from this process.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony regarding the doula profession. In closing, I urge you to support S.B. No 1 to define the doula profession.

Sincerely,
Sarah Ganong
Hartford