

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

My name is Maggie Goodwin and I live in West Haven, Connecticut. **I stand in support of S.B. No. 1**, An Act Equalizing Comprehensive Access to Mental, Behavioral and Physical Health Care in Response to the Pandemic. I am writing on behalf of National **Organization for Women as a CT NOW** board member.

NOW CT supports the bill but there are two sections of the bill that we are asking for a change in language.

**First, is 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.** 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. 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 for the women of CT. **NOW CT commends the endorsement of a 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.**

**Second, I also urge you to add to this bill the language in attached guidelines for rationing of care.** This is put forth by a broad coalition of advocates and consumers which NOW CT is a part of who are concerned about discriminatory rationing of healthcare. **We are asking for the bill to provide statewide guidance to all hospitals that would clearly prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, disability, age or sex in the rationing of life sustaining health care,** should that be necessary at any time. Without guidance provided by this legislation, the members of NOW CT and others are concerned that implicit bias against women and others may affect decisions on rationing. **Suggested language is attached.**

In closing, I as a member of NOW CT board representing NOW CT urge you to support S.B. No 1 with the described additions and modification of language.

Thank you for your consideration.