

March 16, 2021

Regarding support of SB 1: An Acting Equalizing Comprehensive Access to Mental, Behavioral and Physical Health Care in Response to the Pandemic.

Good morning:

Public Health Committee

I would like to take this time to share why it is important to have Doula support.

My name is Carolyn "Maawiyah" Graves I live in Bridgeport, CT. for over fifteen years. I am a graduate and trained Doula from Earth's Natural Touch Birth Care & Beyond.

I decided I would become come a Doula for a few reasons. At eighteen years old I remember how it was when my first born came into the world. My mother was not a part of the birth nor was the biological father there. I was alone in a room other than the nurses and the actual doctor for the birth of my child. I didn't know what to do or were to go during that time for resources. This was in 1982 So imagine that!! Being all alone not knowing what is next.

To my point even today it goes on and not much is mentioned about resources most don't even know what a Doula is!

Fast forward to share with you all my experience as a trained Doula. My very first case was 32 hours in the room while the mother labored. As a Doula I was a part of the birthing team with the mother and husband I was there from the beginning to the end.

Being there as her Doula was to encourage her to listen to her body it was her birth of course the doctors and nurse wanted to give her epidural. She did have that knowledge and she understood that she was in control of her birth and it was her sacred space in bringing her child into the world. She decided not to have epidural. The mother and her husband decided to continue without pain meds.

When I tell you we walked around the hallways until we were taking turns!!! One of our techniques that we do as Doulas is to support with comfort measures we know that laying down on the bed for a long period of time goes against the gravity in allowing the baby to come down. So we encourage walks ,dancing by getting the pelvis ready and massages giving the mother what she wants so that she is in a peaceful non- stressful state of mind. Otherwise, non peaceful environment can cause stress on mother and

baby. Our goal for the expecting mothers is to feel safe and relaxed through the laboring process so that mothers can focus on the birth of the child . Although my client the mother of the child had a cesarean. Every pregnant women has the right to express and say what she feels and wants during her birth!!

It was on her time not the doctors making the decision for her as they were trying to do after about ten hours in. The mother stayed true to her body and the process. Through it all she gave birth to a healthy little girl.

This ties in with the fact that Nationally Cesareans currently account for one or every three births 34.8% of live birth in CT are cesarean births, 31.9%. Cesareans cost approximately 50 percent more than vaginal births. Also note that the United States is, also, one of only 13 countries in the world where the rate of maternal mortality is now worse than it was 25 years ago.

According to the Center for Disease Control reports that black mothers are at a higher risk for pregnancy complications, which results in mother and child deaths for Black Women particularly in low income areas can definitely benefit from the assistance that a Doula provides.

In sharing the reasons are as follows:

- We know that as a woman of color having a baby in most cases don't get the same treatment as that of a white women.
- Having a Doula we also acknowledge that their space is theirs and that they are in control of that.
- We know that having a Doula supports expecting mothers and we are there to listen and we are trained to do that by making those connections encouraging the mothers to connect with the resources they need before birth and after birth to have a healthy child and healthy mother before BIRTH!!

Inclosing we know that having Douls support can help decrease the black infant mortality rate in the U.S. which we know has the highest amongst any wealthy nation.

With that I am asking that the Committee support the Bill SB 1: An Acting Equalizing Comprehensive Acess to Mental, Behavioral and Physical Health Care in Response Pandemic.

Thank you for allowing me to share this information with all

Carolyn Maawiyah Graves