

Senator Mary Daugherty Abrams, Representative Jonathan Steinberg, and Members of the Public Health Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly, **I firmly stand in support of SB 1, An Act Equalizing Comprehensive Access to Mental, Behavioral and Physical Health Care in Response to the Pandemic.**

My name is Polly C. Moran and I live and work in Hartford, Connecticut. I have practiced Nurse-Midwifery for over 25 years in Connecticut and am presently the Legislative Chair of the American College of Nurse Midwives' Connecticut Affiliate. For many years, I have seen firsthand the important work that Doulas do when working with pregnant women and their families. 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. The important work of building trust, helping women prenatally, during the intrapartum period and during the important and critical period of postpartum care, cannot be underestimated. SB 1 will support this work by providing a definition and identity to the profession of Doulas that will be critical in capacity building, thereby ensuring greater access by more families and individuals in the State of Connecticut to Doula Services. It is important to make this especially true for low-income women, where the impact of doula services has been seen to have the greatest impact.

Unfortunately, we are a country that needs to urgently improve birth outcomes and decrease maternal morbidity and mortality. The US is falling behind almost all other industrial nations in regards to maternal and child health; we now rank 47th in the world in maternal mortality. Black women are nearly four times more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications than white women in the U.S. Asian and Hispanic women die at higher rates also. Connecticut continues to see substantial and persistent disparities in maternal deaths by race and ethnicity. Stakeholders throughout the state recognize this. The Governor has a Commission to address the maternal health crisis; civic leaders and organizations have joined together to target this inequity, and now the legislature has put forward a number of possible laws to address the problem. The time has come to support SB 1 and allow the state to define the scope, professionalism and importance of the Doula as a powerful ally to address these issues.

Research shows that the presence of Doulas help decreases cesarean deliveries, shorten labor, heighten patient satisfaction and increase success in breastfeeding. Much like the research underlining the benefits of Midwives as birth attendants, Doulas for labor and postpartum support profoundly changes how women give birth. Evidence strongly suggests that providing Doula support through Medicaid is likely to reduce significant racial health disparities, which are tied to social as well as medical factors.

I support the effort to realize a study to determine if 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 support our allies, the Doulas in providing a proven successful response to the maternal health crisis. I support **SB 1** to define the doula profession.

Sincerely,

Polly C. Moran, Certified Nurse-Midwife, American College of Nurse-Midwives, CT Affiliate