

Human Services Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1078

AN ACT CONCERNING DOULA CERTIFICATION AND MEDICAID

Title: REIMBURSEMENT FOR DOULA SERVICES.

Vote Date:

Vote Action:

PH Date: 3/21/2019

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL: Human Services Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The reason for this bill is establish access to certification by allowing doulas to obtain their certification through local and state organizations. The intent of this legislation is to seek payment for certified doulas for their services through Medicaid reimbursements in order to combat social and medical disparities amongst underserved women.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Kathleen Brennan, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Social Services; applauds the committee on the proponents of this bill, in which, emphasizes the need of improvements in birth outcomes for mothers and babies. She explains, federal requirements mandate that DSS ensure that services under the Medicaid program are of high quality and are medically necessary. The Department must be able to tell Connecticut Medical Society (CMS) exactly who is considered a qualified doula in order to submit a request for payment of services. The Department encourages further study on the clarification or definition of who is a doula and what the doula would be authorized to do. Without this information the Department of Social Services cannot support this legislation in its current form.

Karen Siegel, M.P.H., Public Health Policy, Connecticut Voices for Children; addresses the importance of doulas and how doula care reduces unnecessary cesarean deliveries which improves delivery and birth outcomes and cost reduction for Medicaid. According to Siegel, “Maternal mortality is a serious concern in the United States and dramatic racial disparities in maternal and infant health outcomes require urgent intervention. Black woman are more than three times as likely as white women to die due to pregnancy related causes”. She explains about 60% of these deaths are preventable and that many of the mothers and newborns

(40%) who are enrolled with Medicaid have higher risk factors and the support from trained doulas reduces these risks.

Madeline Granato, Policy Manager, Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF); is in support of this legislation. She suggests for lawmakers to view access to Doula care as a critical health equity intervention. The support of this legislation through Medicaid will reduce racial disparities in maternal health and improve health outcomes for mothers and their newborns.

Erin E. Jones, JD, Regional Director of Government Affairs, March of Dimes; supports this legislation on behalf of Medicaid recipients that do not have access to pay for Doulas. March of Dimes recognizes the importance of increased training, support and capacity development for doulas, including doulas from racially, ethnically, socioeconomically and culturally diverse communities.

Arvia Walker, Public Policy & Strategic Engagement Specialist, Planned Parenthood; is in support of this legislation for the expansion of Medicaid reimbursement. She explains the importance of doula care will combat poor maternal and infant outcomes and racial health disparities. She expresses that not only is this issue a health equity but will also be a cost savings to the state due to doulas assisting in lower cesarean births compared to vaginal births.

Tekisha Dwan Everette, PhD, Executive Director, Health Equity Solutions; supports this legislation for the improvement of health outcomes for women and infants enrolled in Medicaid through the provision and coverage for doula services.

Geralynn McGee, Policy Advocate, Greater Hartford Legal Aid; supports this legislation on behalf of African American woman and low income family households that are Medicaid recipients. Based off of studies, the maternal mortality rates in African American mothers are 3 to 4 times higher than the rates of non-Hispanic white mothers.

Raul Pino M.D., M.P.H., Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Public Health; requires the establishment of a program to certify doulas, in addition the Department of Public Health is in opposition of this legislation due to the possible creation of unbudgeted appropriations.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

State Senator, Martin M. Looney (D), District 11, Connecticut General Assembly; supports the context of this bill to increase overall improvement in healthy birth outcomes.

State Representative, Kim Rose (D), District 118, Connecticut General Assembly; states this legislation will support "vulnerable women who have the greatest need for support and the fewest options available for them".

Liz Gustafson, Organizer & Volunteer Coordinator, NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut; points out that evidence strongly suggests that providing doula support through Medicaid is likely to reduce racial health disparities, which are associated to medical and social factors in addition to discrimination and racism faced by woman of color.

SciHonor Devotion Bey; encourages the committee to recognize the abilities and care provided by competent doulas in contributing in the well-being of mothers and babies in underserved communities.

Dr. Jordana Frost; is in support of this legislation.

Dr. Laurel LaPorte-Grimes; is in support of this legislation.

Sarah Akua Simpson; is in support of this legislation.

Laurie Sweet; is in support of this legislation.

Karell Rose; is in support of this legislation.

Angela Bellas; is in support of this legislation.

Erinne Bugge; is in support of this legislation.

Natasha Ortiz; is in support of this legislation.

Nalani; is in support of this legislation.

Erin Morelli; is in support of this legislation.

Erin Livensparger; is in support of this legislation.

Muriel Solberg; is in support of this legislation.

Polly Moran; is in support of this legislation.

Annie Kearns; is in support of this legislation.

Kristianna Smith; is in support of this legislation.

Carolyn Maawiyah Gravers; is in support of this legislation.

Yvette Michel; is in support of this legislation.

Dorothy Vecchio; is in support of this legislation.

Justin Mikowski; is in support of this legislation.

Dana Oakes- Sand; is in support of this legislation.

Hafeeza Ture; is in support of this legislation.

Prema Winn; is in support of this legislation.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Kathleen Brennan, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Social Services; opposes this legislation.

Raul Pino M.D., M.P.H., Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Public Health; opposes this legislation.

Reported by: Noemi Hammonds

Date: March 25, 2019