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PARLIAMENTARIAN
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Ways and Means Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 6, 2020

House Bill 1067 Doulas - Doula Technical Assistance Advisory Group and Certification

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to present House Bill 1067 Doulas - Doula Technical Assistance Advisory Group and Certification, which would establish the Doula Technical Assistance Advisory Group to study Medicaid programs in other states that reimburse doulas, and to make recommendations on workforce development for doulas and a voluntary state doula certification program.

A doula is a birth companion who provides personal and physical nonclinical support to women, or families, throughout the woman's pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum experience. Extensive research has shown that community-based doula care improves childbirth outcomes and increases care quality - particularly for Black women in the state, who are dying at rates four times higher than their white counterparts from pregnancy complications. Doulas can help reduce overall spending, by helping to avoid unnecessary medical procedures. Despite these many benefits, doula services remain underutilized, mainly due to cost.

HB 1067 would create the Doula Technical Assistance Advisory Group in Maryland, consisting of stakeholders to study and make recommendations on expanding access to doula services. Based on their recommendations, the Maryland Department of Health may be instructed to provide Medicaid reimbursement for doula services, establish a voluntary doula certification program, and adopt additional regulations on workforce development for doulas and expansion of doula care to low-income individuals and families. **I am offering an amendment to require the Advisory Group to also study all current state regulated insurance program reimbursements and payment policies for doulas.**

Doulas have been found to reduce the impact of racism and implicit bias in health care for Black mothers by providing culturally competent, patient centered care and advocacy. Medicaid coverage would help eliminate the current cost barrier, making doula support accessible to those who need it most, and helping to reduce racial disparities we see in maternal deaths across the nation. For these reasons, I urge the committee to give a **favorable** report for **House Bill 1067**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jheanelle Wilkins'.

Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins