



MARYLAND CITIZENS' HEALTH INITIATIVE

**TESTIMONY FOR SENATE BILL 166
FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**

Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Doula Program
Before the Finance Committee

By Stephanie Klapper, Deputy Director, Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative, Inc.
February 8, 2022

Chair Kelley and Members of the Finance Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 166 with some amendments. We thank Senator Ellis for sponsoring this important legislation.

Thanks to the great work of the Maryland General Assembly, Maryland is one of the leading states for health care. However, there is still more to do. While maternal mortality rates are improving in Maryland, disparities persist. Black Marylanders die at a rate that is four times higher than their white counterparts of pregnancy or child-birth related complications.¹ Research suggests that community-based doulas can help improve birth outcomes and reduce disparities.² Codifying the Maryland Medical Assistance Program Doula Program will help underserved Marylanders survive and thrive during the pregnancy and post-partum period.

To strengthen the bill even further, we suggest amendments to remove section C about certification standards and section G about payment rates, and instead include language to give the MDH the ability to set the certification standards and payment rates with input from the Doula Technical Assistance Advisory Group committee.

Thank you again to the Committee for your recognized efforts toward improving access to quality, affordable health care for all Marylanders. This bill will help Maryland remain a leader in health care. We urge a favorable report from the Committee on Senate Bill 166.

¹ Maryland Department of Health. 2020 Annual Report Maryland Maternal Mortality Review. Accessed Feb. 3, 2022. <https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/mch/Pages/mmr.aspx>

² Gruber, K. J., Cupito, S. H., & Dobson, C. F. (2013). Impact of doulas on healthy birth outcomes. *The Journal of perinatal education*, 22(1), 49–58. <https://doi.org/10.1891/1058-1243.22.1.49>