



**Doula Alliance of Maryland**  
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January 15, 2025

The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk  
Chair, House Health & Government  
Operations Committee  
241 Taylor House Office Building  
6 Bladen Street Annapolis, MD 21401  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Bonnie Cullison  
Vice Chair, House Health & Government  
Operations Committee  
241 Taylor House Office Building  
6 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Re: Letter in Support of House Bill 170 - Health – Maternal and Child Health Population Health Improvement Fund – Use**

Dear Chair Pena Melnyk & Vice Chair Cullison:

The Doula Alliance of Maryland (DAM) works to connect doulas with other birth workers, resources, events, and ongoing advocacy efforts in the state. DAM was co-founded by doulas and community advocates in Baltimore. We are composed of community-based doulas, researchers, and policy and legal advocates who are combating the maternal mortality crisis from the ground up. We are community perinatal health workers, mothers, and Baltimore residents, and come from the communities we serve. **DAM strongly supports HB 170**, which would extend the date through which the Maternal and Child Health Population Health Improvement Fund may be used for expenses associated with maternal and child health population health improvements from December 31, 2025 to December 31, 2027.

**Maryland took the important step to expand its Medicaid program to provide doula services to beneficiaries on February 21, 2022 as a direct result of funding from the Maternal and Child Health Population Health Improvement Fund.** We thank the Maryland General Assembly for passing House Bill 765 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Doula Services – Coverage (2022) which made doula services a permanent fixture in Maryland's Medicaid program. For nearly two years, we have been supporting individual doulas and doula groups through the Medicaid enrollment and reimbursement process, engaging with the Maryland Department of Health on improvements to Medicaid enrollment, and working towards birth worker coalition building in Baltimore and across the state.

**Research supports a strong, well-documented link between structural racism and health disparities, especially for Black communities, in the United States.** In Maryland, Black birthing individuals are 2.3 times more likely to die of pregnancy-related and pregnancy-associated causes than their White counterparts. Maryland's infant mortality rate for Black non-Hispanic babies is almost 3 times as high as the rate for White non-Hispanic babies. The Maryland Medicaid doula program is one step toward maternal health parity and an acknowledgement that all pregnant and postpartum people deserve access to full spectrum doula care.

**Although doulas are a key component of holistic birth care that results in healthier parents and babies, they are facing their own disparities to access training and workforce development, and are suffering from high rates of burnout.** Our own community doula landscape survey and listening sessions have revealed that doulas face many barriers associated with training, certification, access, and registration with the Medicaid doula benefit. Community doulas often experience the same challenges as the communities they serve and benefit from similar support. “[We’re] in the same neighborhood, lifestyle, tax bracket as our clients. Their stressors are most likely our stressors,” a doula listening session participant explained. Doula work is emotionally taxing and doulas need to be connected to resources to manage the impact of their work.

**HB 170 would enable our State to spend the remaining \$24 million in the Fund on maternal and child health initiatives designed to reduce maternal and child health disparities.** We highly recommend that a portion of these remaining funds be invested not only in the doula Medicaid reimbursement program, but also in addressing the barriers described above that prevent many of Maryland's doulas, particularly community-based doulas, from participating in the program. This could include establishing scholarships for doulas to obtain their certifications and pay for liability insurance, two Medicaid program requirements that are financial barriers to participation.

For these reasons, the Doula Alliance of Maryland urges the committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report for **HB 170**. Thank you for your consideration of our letter of support. If you have any questions about this letter or our coalition, please contact Ana Rodney at [doulaalliancemd@gmail.com](mailto:doulaalliancemd@gmail.com).

Sincerely,

Doula Alliance of Maryland