



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: Senate Bill 914- Doulas - Doula Technical Assistance Advisory Group and Certification

SPONSOR: Senator Lam, *et al.*

HEARING DATE: March 10, 2020

COMMITTEE: Finance

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 914**, which establishes the Doula Technical Assistance Advisory Group, its composition, chair, and staffing. The Advisory Group will study doula programs, review studies and reports, meet with stakeholders and make recommendations. Upon the Advisory Group's positive recommendation, the Maryland Department of Health shall adopt regulations establishing a voluntary doula certification program.

In the United States and Maryland, low-income women, particularly those of color, are at the highest risk of poor birth outcomes. African American women are particularly vulnerable, as are three to four times more likely than non-Hispanic white women to die during pregnancy or shortly after birth. Doula, or birth companion care, is one tool that has proven effective in addressing maternal health disparities.

Mothers with doula support have improved health outcomes as do their babies. This includes fewer preterm and low birthweight babies, higher breastfeeding rates, lessened risks of cesarean sections and instrumental deliveries, and less need for pain relief during birth. Doulas can also help reduce the impacts of implicit bias in health care on pregnant women of color by providing individually tailored, culturally appropriate, and patient-centered care and advocacy.

Senate Bill 914 would expand access to high-quality doula services. The Prince George's County Health Department supports certification of doulas with the understanding that it will be important to assign oversight and quality assurance monitoring to a state agency. Ensuring access to high-quality, affordable health care

services is a core element of the Prince George's County Health Department's mission.

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 914** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.