



**Opposition Statement SB163 –
Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Doulas**
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We Strongly Oppose SB163 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Doulas

On behalf of our members in Charles County and across the state, we respectfully yet strongly object to SB163 as written, to the extent that it creates an organizational structure and alternate public funding stream to enrich the abortion industry. **By approving this bill, the state will be diverting critical funding from birthing coaches to the billion dollar abortion industry.** The bill deceptively speaks to pregnancy without disclosing that it can be used to further the abortion industry’s expansion into the area of abortion “doula’s” or abortion coaches. The abortion industry has rebranded itself and labeled the term “full spectrum doula services” to include abortion. **The Supreme Court has held that the alleged constitutional “right” to an abortion “implies no limitation on the authority of a State to make a value judgment favoring childbirth over abortion, and to implement that judgment by the allocation of public funds.” *Harris v. McRae* (1980).**

Doulas, as defined by the ‘Moving Forward’ and the ‘Southern Birth Justice Network’ are “... non-medical professionals trained to give physical and emotional support in **childbirth**. Doulas offer constant, uninterrupted attention and encouragement to the birthing person. They are skilled in comfort and relaxation techniques for **labor** (like position changes, breathing exercises, massage) and experienced in giving non-judgmental emotional support. Additionally, doulas can provide extended support during pregnancy and after giving birth.” The utilization of doulas has been proven to reduce the rate of Cesareans, low-birth weight, preterm births as well as increasing positive provider interactions between providers and the birthing person.

No public funding for abortions

Taxpayers should not be forced to fund elective abortions, which make up the vast majority of abortions performed in Maryland. State funding for abortion on demand with taxpayer funds is in direct conflict with the will of the people and violates our religious freedoms. A 2019 Marist poll showed that 54% of Americans, both “pro-life” and “pro-choice” oppose the use of tax dollars to pay for a woman’s abortion. Never has more than 40% of the American public supported taxpayer funding of abortion.

Love them both

This bill can be exploited to prioritize funding for abortion over prenatal care and childbirth. 83% of Americans polled favor laws that protect both the lives of women and unborn children. Public funds instead should be prioritized to fund health and family planning services, included traditional pregnancy doula programs, which have the objective of saving the lives of both mother and children.

Pregnancy is not a disease

Abortion is not health care. It is a brutal procedure that ends the lives of preborn children through suction, dismemberment or chemical poisoning and poses significant physical and mental health risks to women and girls, including loss of future fertility. Abortion creates a culture of violence and abuse. Abortion is the leading cause of death of Black Americans, more than all other causes combined. Planned Parenthood sells abortions and provides little to no prenatal services or well-woman health care services. Women of Color and all Maryland women and families deserve better than abortion.

The Advent of the Abortion Doula - Daily Citizen

<https://dailycitizen.focusonthefamily.com/theadvent-of-the-abortion-doula/> The Advent of the Abortion Doula - Daily Citizen

Have you heard about abortion doulas? It sounds strange, but it has actually become the latest trend in the abortion business. The use of abortion doulas is an attempt by the abortion business to acknowledge that women do experience a level of emotional and physical distress during an abortion. Of course, an abortion doula's job isn't to counsel a woman on the ethical implications of her decision or to assist her in managing the emotional fallout. No, the sole job of the abortion doula is to act as an advocate for abortion and the abortion business.

What are Doulas?

Childbirth is an intense and often overwhelming experience. To help women manage the pain and the stress of birth, some families choose to hire a doula to act as an additional support system for the mother and father. Doulas are "trained professionals who provide continuous physical, emotional and informational support to a mother before, during and shortly after childbirth to help her achieve the healthiest, most satisfying experience possible." According to DONA International, the world's largest doula certifying organization, the doula is supposed to help the patient express her desires, concerns and help facilitate communication with medical professionals. In essence, doulas act as an advocate for the patient and her family. Despite a similar description, an abortion doula has little in common with their counterpart.

What is an Abortion Doula?

The first abortion doula program was started by a group of New York City women in 2007, and its success has led to the establishment of similar programs throughout the country. According to Self.com, an "abortion doula is someone who is trained to provide emotional, physical, and informational support during and after a surgical abortion procedure." However, it quickly becomes apparent in articles and testimonials describing the practice that abortion doulas don't really fulfill any of these requirements.

What Do Abortion Doulas Do?

Most abortion doulas are volunteers who act as a pseudo support system for women who were denied the opportunity to bring their own. They act as distractors, engaging clients in meaningless conversations and holding their hand before, during and immediately after an abortion. For example, they talk with their clients about television series, Netflix and their other children. Discussing the abortion doesn't occur unless the client initiates the conversation. One of the founders of the original abortion doula program described her work as mirroring. If the client is sad, she'll empathize with her. If the client is worried about the pain, she'll focus on that. The use of mirroring describes the emptiness of the interaction. Mirrors are superficial and only reflect the original image. They don't provide the deeper emotional or psychological support a woman might need before or after an abortion.

Why do Women Need an Abortion Doula?

In most abortion offices, the woman's chosen support system is not allowed to accompany her at any point during the abortion appointment. That includes the child's father, a friend, or a family member.

Although there are some smaller offices that do allow women to bring support during the abortion, places like Planned Parenthood do not. One woman, who did not have the option to use an abortion doula, described her disappointment that her boyfriend was forced to stay in the waiting room during her abortion at Planned Parenthood. She stated, "I wish he could have been there for the process; it's hard to explain to him what I've just been through." She rationalizes that it is to protect women against outside pressure, but that's only part of the reason. Abortionists want women to have abortions, and they don't want women or their partners to change their minds about having an abortion. The easiest way to do that is to isolate the patient so that there are no possible alternatives and no outside voices that could raise objections about the abortion. That also means that there is no one to witness the brutality of how an abortion is actually performed. The public's knowledge of how an abortion is actually done is surprisingly limited, and abortion businesses like Planned Parenthood exploit that ignorance to continue the murder of preborn babies.

Testimonies of Abortion Doulas

The stories of women who work as abortion doulas are often disturbing. They describe seeing baby parts in buckets, conflicted and distressed mothers, serious abortion complications and forcing themselves to see an intact aborted preborn as not human, but as an alien. It is a strange world, but also demonstrates something incredibly important. Despite claims to the contrary, abortion doulas don't help or support women. They placate them and advocate more for the abortionist than for their client. For example, an abortion doula shared one heartbreaking moment when a patient asked if she was right to abort her child. It was a moment of questioning and doubt where the patient may have been reconsidering her choice, but the abortion doula responded, "No one's going to make you do anything you don't want to do." It's an empty platitude that deflects the opportunity to truly discuss what options might be available for the preborn child and invest in what is actually occurring in the woman's life that led her to consider abortion in the first place. Another woman expressed how she felt "so f—ed up about (her abortion)," but of course she received no counseling or support. The abortion doula merely replied, "That's okay, that's normal." There is no attempt by the abortion doula to address the complex emotions that the patient was having, just the hollow reassurance that her feelings were okay and normal despite the abnormal situation. Perhaps one of the most disturbing stories is the one about Stephanie.* The abortion doula shares how this young woman revealed to her that she was in an abusive relationship with an older man. Her parents didn't know about the pregnancy or the boyfriend. After the abortion, Stephanie asks her abortion doula, "Do you think I'm too young for an abortion?" The abortion doula tells her no and that she made the responsible choice. Then Stephanie confides that she's actually only 14-years old. There is no evidence that the abortion doula contacted the police about a possible case of statutory rape. Women who express their internal turmoil about their abortion have the right to have their struggles recognized by the one person who is supposedly there for her, but that doesn't fit with the general narrative most abortion advocates want to push. For the abortion business, aborting a preborn child should be considered a "normal" and responsible decision.

Conclusion

The original purpose of a doula was to help life enter this world by serving women and newborns in the midst of pregnancy and childbirth. But abortion doulas do not serve women or children, they serve the abortion industry. Abortion doulas are there to distract women from the ethical, emotional and spiritual implications of having an abortion. An abortion doula's only job is to encourage abortion, deflect the client's emotions, and hold her hand while the abortionist ends the life of her preborn child.

Abortion Support — Baltimore Doula Project

Baltimore Doulas Project is committed to providing empowering, nonjudgemental and client-centered physical and emotional support to people before, during and after their abortion. We recognize that every person's abortion experience is unique and we believe that all people should have access to the information, support, and resources necessary to make informed decisions.

Currently, BDP is providing abortion doula support to clients at three clinics in the Baltimore area. We also partner with the Baltimore Abortion Fund to meet the needs of those seeking practical support such as childcare and transportation during their abortion procedure.

We seek to recognize the obstacles that people of all backgrounds face in reaching reproductive health services, but particularly low-income people, LGBTQI-identified people, youth, and people of color. We believe that people of all genders deserve care and respect when accessing abortion.

We have been providing abortion doula services since July 2014, originally under the name Baltimore Doulas for Choice and with the mentorship of the DC Doulas for Choice Collective and The Doula Project in NYC. We host annual abortion doula trainings for those in the Baltimore area with the interest and capacity to volunteer with us. Please refer to the Training page for up to date information on any upcoming opportunities.