



**Opposition Statement SB163 –  
Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Doula Pilot Program**

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**We Oppose SB163 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Doula Pilot Program**

On behalf of our members across the state, we continue to object to SB163 as amended, to the extent that the bill sponsor has repeatedly refused requests to amend his bill to exclude its application and related financial benefit to abortion providers. This bill is supported by the **National Abortion Rights Action League** and as amended, it will create an organizational structure and alternate public funding stream that will enrich the abortion industry.

**By approving this bill without the requested amendment, the state will be diverting critical funding from birthing coaches to the two-billion dollar abortion industry.** This 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. We have provided the bill sponsor with supporting documentation that abortion doulas are operating in Maryland and in fact, testified in support of this bill last session. The abortion industry has rebranded itself and labeled the term “full spectrum doula services” to include abortion.

**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** - 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). 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. Planned Parenthood sells abortions and provides little to no prenatal services or well-woman health care services.

**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. Women of Color and all Maryland women and families deserve better than abortion.

## **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.

If you are interested in doula support please contact us at [balimoredoulaproject@gmail.com](mailto:balimoredoulaproject@gmail.com)