



SB 163
Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Doula Pilot Program
Hearing of the House Health and Government Operations Committee
March 30, 2021
1:30 PM

Dear House Health and Government Operations Committee,

I am writing to express my support for this bill with amendments.

I am disappointed that it appears that the bill was significantly amended without consultation with the stakeholders who would be providing these important services. As both a doula and mother that has relied on the good work of doulas to advocate for a positive pregnancy outcome, I have these points to make in favor with amendments of the bill. Reading this bill, it seems we have been grossly left out and not invited to "the table". In Maryland, black women die and are affected at the highest rate by maternal mortality. It is only right that their voices, practices, and desires be addressed by this bill. It is my humble intention today with this letter as an advocate, a doula, and a pregnant individual to offer these amendments to strengthen the language that you've already written:

1. In order to ensure this bill equitably supports all mothers in Maryland, I implore that the pilot program sites be determined using Maryland maternal mortality data as reported in the Annual Maryland Maternal Mortality Program Report: **"The Department shall determine the pilot program sites based on most recently available maternal mortality statistics in Maryland."**
2. The doula certifying organizations that are currently listed do not center or even acknowledge the maternal health crisis and offer no training, incentives, or scholarships to include and bolster representation for communities most affected by the need for doula support. In my opinion the following national and reputable organizations should at least be included if not replace the existing organization's listed:
 - Doula Training international
 - Mama Shafiya monroe
 - Mamatoto village
3. During the 2020 state legislative session, this Committee and the Senate Finance committee asked the Department of Health to convene the Doula Technical Assistance Advisory Group, as described in HB 1067/SB914. This advisory group, which will study barriers to doula care in Maryland and make recommendations on voluntary certification and Medicaid and private insurance reimbursement, will begin meeting in May 2021. This group includes MDH, community-based doulas, advocates, researchers and other maternal health professionals. This bill should be amended to tie in the work of the Advisory Group to the pilot program so that the two are working in unison. I propose the following amendment: **"The Department of Health shall consult with the**

Doula Technical Advisory Group on reimbursement rates and the implementation of the Doula Pilot Program.”

With these amendments I can feel comfortable with supporting SB 163 moving forward as I move closer to giving birth to my own child by session close hopefully. It is important that we as a state acknowledge the importance of doula work while supporting an equitable look at how to do so with the greatest reach and highest impact for those at highest risk. It is with these amendments that I ask for a favorable report on this bill.

AMENDMENTS

On page 4 in line 6, insert “DOULA TRAINING INTERNATIONAL, MAMA SHAFIYA MONROE, AND MAMATOTO VILLAGE” after “ASSOCIATION”

On p. 4, strike lines 15-17 in their entirety.

On p. 4, line 15, insert

“(D) The Department shall determine the pilot program sites based on most recently available maternal mortality statistics in Maryland.”

On page 5 after line 15 insert:

“SECTION 3, AND IT BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the Department of Health shall consult with the Doula Technical Advisory Group on reimbursement rates and the implementation of the Doula Pilot Program.”



Signed: Ana Rodney, Executive Director, MOMCares

Date: 3/26/2021