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### **LETTER TO SUPPORT**

#### **HB1202 Hospitals and Birth Centers - COVID-19 Visitation Policies - Doulas.**

Good day, my name is Taiwo I Adeloje-Ajao and I urge you to support HB1202 Hospitals and Birth Centers - COVID-19 Visitation Policies - Doulas. I am a DONA-trained doula who has had the privilege of training as a doula both as a nursing student at Johns Hopkins School of Nursing in 2014 and as a community doula in 2018 and 2020. My journey as a doula has led me to also becoming a perinatal nurse with certification in Maternal & Newborn Nursing; embracing my Masters of Public Health in Maternal-Child Health; becoming board-certified in lactation, & currently pursuing studies in Nurse Midwifery.

Doula service is the foundation of all that I do to support families and this year has been tremendously difficult as doulas from across the state have been limited in their services to families birthing in hospitals and birth centers. When a doula has been paid by a client to provide specialized professional services, it is unfair to place restrictions on the evidence-based impact that they have been paid for.

A doula is worth their wages and should be recognized as a part of the birth team. Doulas are proven to have several strategic benefits. Birth support provided by doulas decrease pain for the laboring person, shortens labor, lessens the use of pain medications (Hofmeyr, 1991). Doulas promote the natural physiologic process of the body to birth, helping to reduce the need for labor induction or augmentation (Caton, Corry et al. 2002). Doulas increase the use of movement and positioning, and help support the client emotionally. There are even more vaginal births due to doulas and thus less c-sections. Doulas provide education throughout the entire perinatal period, empowering families to engage in shared decision making. Doulas promote better birth experiences too (Gilland, 2010).

Additionally, as a Black birthworker, co-director of non-profit Hello Baby Baltimore and Chair of The Black Mother-Baby Team for DONA International, I have experienced safe holistic birth for Black Birthing people because of the strategic role of the doula. As we fight Black Maternal

Health in Maryland, please pass the HB1202 Hospitals and Birth Centers - COVID-19 Visitation Policies - Doulas, and embrace Maryland-based doulas as partners for improving maternal health in Maryland.

Sincerely,



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REFERENCES

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