



Maryland  
Hospital Association

February 22, 2022

To: The Honorable Delores G. Kelley, Chair, Senate Finance Committee

Re: Letter of Support - Senate Bill 503 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Doula Services – Coverage

Dear Chair Kelley:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of Senate Bill 503. This bill aligns with the proposed Maryland Medicaid regulations, supported by the Doula Technical Assistance Advisory Group to create a permanent Medicaid doula benefit.<sup>1</sup> Doulas are expected to be eligible to enroll in Medicaid and begin billing for services this month.

The Health Services Cost Review Commission allocated \$8 million to Medicaid to support maternal and child health goals in the Statewide Integrated Health Improvement Strategy.<sup>2</sup> Half of this funding, including the federal match, will be used to establish the permanent Medicaid benefit for doula and home visiting services. The reimbursement model allows up to eight prenatal or postpartum services, in addition to attendance during labor and delivery, per birthing parent. Each prenatal or postpartum visit would include up to 60 minutes.

Medicaid reimbursement increases access to doulas for patients who may have never had the opportunity due to the expense. SB 503 and Medicaid's proposed regulations complement the state goal to lower the severe maternal morbidity rate under the [Statewide Integrated Health Improvement Strategy](#).

Research shows positive outcomes for patients who work with doulas, including higher rates of breastfeeding initiation and vaginal deliveries.<sup>3</sup> One focus group study found doula support for racially and ethnically diverse women and women of lower socioeconomic status can increase feelings of “security, empowerment and connection...and help the patient participate in shared-decision making.”

For these reasons, we ask for a favorable report on SB 503.

For more information, please contact:

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<sup>1</sup> Maryland Register (December, 2021)

<sup>2</sup> Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission. (May 2021). “[Final Recommendation on Use of Maternal and Child Health Funding](#).”

<sup>3</sup> Journal of Midwifery & Women's Health. (2013). “[Doula care supports near-universal breastfeeding initiation among diverse, low-income women](#).”