



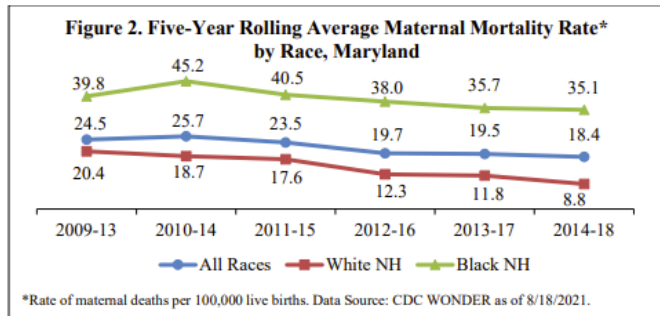
Testimony Concerning SB 503
“Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Doula Services—Coverage”
Submitted to the Senate Finance Committee
February 22, 2022

Position: Support

Maryland Family Network (MFN) supports SB 503, which would require Maryland Medicaid Assistance Program to reimburse certified doulas for their services. We applaud Maryland’s Department of Health for the steps they have already taken to implement Medicaid reimbursement for doula services. This legislation would codify those efforts.

MFN has worked since 1945 to improve the availability and quality of child care and other supports for children and families in Maryland. As the largest and oldest statewide child advocacy organization in Maryland, MFN is strongly committed to ensuring the health and well-being of children and pregnant women across our state.

There are significant racial disparities in birth outcomes for Black birthing individuals and Black babies. Black individuals who give birth in Maryland are 4 times more likely to die after childbirth than White individuals.



According to the State’s Maternal Mortality Review Program, “Compared to ‘09-‘13, the ‘14-‘18 White non-Hispanic Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) in Maryland **decreased 56.7 percent** and the Black non-Hispanic MMR decreased 12.0 percent. Although the rates are decreasing for both racial groups, **the**

disparities are increasing. The ‘09-‘13 Black non-Hispanic MMR was 2.0 times the White non-Hispanic MMR, while the **‘14-‘18 Black non-Hispanic MMR was 4.0 times the White non-Hispanic MMR.**”ⁱ (Emphasis Added.)

Having a doula throughout pregnancy and after delivery is one of the few ways to improve birth outcomes for Black birthing individuals and for Black babies. Studies have shown that people who work with doulas are less likely to give birth to low-birth-weight babies (a leading cause of infant mortality), less likely to have complications with their delivery, and more likely to initiate breast feeding.ⁱⁱ Allowing Medicaid reimbursement for doulas will expand access to doulas across Maryland, and thus could decrease racial disparities in maternal mortality for Black Marylanders giving birth.

For these reasons we urge a favorable report on SB 503.

¹ “Maryland Maternal Mortality Review 2020 Annual Report,” Health –General Article § 13-1207 -- § 13-1208 and § 13-1212 at p. 6-7. <https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/mch/Documents/MMR/HG%20%20a7%2013-1207%2013-1208%20and%20%20a713-1212%20%20Maryland%20Maternal%20Mortality%20Review%202020.pdf>

¹ Gruber KJ, Cupito SH, Dobson CF. Impact of doulas on healthy birth outcomes. *J Perinat Educ.* 2013;22(1):49–58. doi:10.1891/1058-1243.22.1.49