



Ashley Black, Staff Attorney
Public Justice Center
201 North Charles Street, Suite 1200
Baltimore, Maryland 21201
410-625-9409, ext. 224
blacka@publicjustice.org

SB 503
Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Doula Services - Coverage
Hearing of the Senate Finance Committee
February 22, 2022
1:00 PM

SUPPORT

The Public Justice Center (PJC) is a not-for-profit civil rights and anti-poverty legal services organization which seeks to advance social justice, economic and racial equity, and fundamental human rights in Maryland. Our Health Rights Project supports policies and practices that promote the overall health of Marylanders struggling to make ends meet, with the explicit goal of promoting strategies that work to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in health outcomes. **PJC supports SB 503**, which would require the Maryland Medical Assistance Program (Medicaid) to cover certain doula services. It would also require a provider to meet certain requirements in order to provide doula services in Maryland’s Medicaid program.

Maryland Medicaid began covering doula services for pregnant and postpartum beneficiaries in January 2022. Doulas are non-medical birth workers who provide emotional and physical support, information and advocacy to birthing people and families during the prenatal, birth and postpartum period.¹ Research supports that doula care provides a wide range of benefits to birthing parents and their babies, including lower cesarean rates, higher breastfeeding initiation rates and shorter labors.² SB 503 would codify the regulations for the Maryland Medicaid Doula Program, COMAR 10.09.39 Doula Services, allowing Maryland to join the growing number of states that have recognized that doula care can improve pregnancy outcomes for low-income birthing people and birthing people of color. Additionally, expanding Medicaid to cover doula care aligns with Medicaid’s previous efforts to address maternal health outcomes, including the expansion of postpartum coverage for maternal health and dental services.

For these reasons, the Public Justice Center urges the committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report for **SB 503**. If you have any questions about this testimony, please contact Ashley Black at 410-625-9409 x 224 or blacka@publicjustice.org.

¹ Amy Chen, *Routes to Success for Medicaid Coverage of Doula Care* (December 14, 2018) <https://9kqpw4dcaw91s37koz5jx17-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/NHeathLawP-PTBi-Issue-Brief-DoulaMedicaidCoverage.pdf>.

² *Id.*
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