

JHEANELLE WILKINS
Legislative District 20
Montgomery County

PARLIAMENTARIAN

Ways and Means Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 350
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3493 · 301-858-3493
800-492-7122 Ext. 3493
Fax 410-841-3445 · 301-858-3445
Jheanelle.Wilkins@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 14, 2022

House Bill 669 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Doula Services – Coverage

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to present **House Bill 669, Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Doula Services – Coverage**, which would allow doulas who meet certain requirements to provide doula services in the Maryland Medical Assistance Program and require the Maryland Medical Assistance Program to cover certain doula services.

This bill codifies the Maryland Department of Health’s regulations on doula reimbursement, which were developed with extensive stakeholder input. The current proposed regulation by the Maryland Department of Health code is 10.09.39 - Doula Services.

Despite decades of medical advancements, pregnant people experience unacceptable maternal health outcomes in our country. According to a 2020 report by the Maryland Department of Health, Black maternal deaths in our state remain consistent with the national mortality average. In Maryland, Black women are four times as likely to die from pregnancy complications than their white counterparts.

Extensive, reliable research shows that doula care is a highly valued model that improves childbirth outcomes, especially for Black families. Doula support during pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period reduce rates of cesarean deliveries, prematurity, and illness in newborns and the likelihood of postpartum depression. Doula care also improves overall satisfaction with childbirth care experience and fosters health practices such as breastfeeding.

House Bill 669 calls for protocols that would ensure that the program would cover doula services that are medically necessary, as well as provided during the prenatal, labor and delivery, or postpartum period. We have drafted amendments to House Bill 669 ensuring Maryland Department of Health’s flexibility in implementing the doula reimbursement program.

HB 669 would have a positive impact on low income individual’s access to doula care. Navigating pregnancy can be challenging for low-income families and obtaining a doula can be lifesaving. For these reasons, I urge a favorable report for **House Bill 669**.

Sincerely,

Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins

