

The Honorable Joseline Peña-Melnyk Chair,
House Health and Government Operations Committee House Office Building,
Taylor House Office Building, Room 21401
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

February 21, 2025

Testimony in support

House Bill 1251 - House Bill 1251 - Health Care Facilities and Medical Professional
Liability Insurers - Obstetric Service Policies (Doula and Birth Policy Transparency Act)

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jessica Watts and I am writing to you to ask you to support and
vote favorably on House Bill 1251.

This bill requires all hospitals to allow doulas, have family friendly policies for
newborn bonding, strengthen the informed consent process for interventions,
and have policies in place for communication when receiving home birth
transfers (there is currently only one hospital in the state of Maryland that is
doing this!).

Becoming a parent is one of the most transformative experiences of a person's
life; there are infinite rewards, and often, just as many challenges. My
experience becoming a mother was met with many challenges in the hospital
system; sadly, I did not realize the lack of transparency regarding hospital and
practice policies from my provider and there was no informed consent or
decision making. What I did receive plenty of was provider biases and fear
tactics. Due to this, I had to undergo three cesarean sections and will mourn the
birthing experience I never had for the rest of my life. I wish I were the only one
with this experience, but unfortunately, it is the story for so many. The families of
Maryland desperately need this bill. Thank you.

All the best,

Jessica Watts

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