

The Honorable Joseline Pena-Melnyk  
Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee  
House Office Building, Rm. 241  
11 Bladen St  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: House Bill 1251

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Committee:

Maryland Families for Safe Birth is submitting testimony in support of HB1251. HB1251 proposes several statutory changes that improve transparency and communication between health care facilities, providers and patients.

Maryland Families for Safe Birth is a grassroots, consumer-driven organization, dedicated to improving access to evidence based, culturally sensitive maternity care for all Maryland families. We have an active membership of over 1700 Maryland families. Our organization frequently hears from frustrated families who want more transparency of institutional policies and clearer communication from their healthcare providers. Consumers cannot make informed decisions about their healthcare if they are not given access to accurate, clear and unbiased information.

There are four main components of HB1251. First, a requirement that a birthing person be allowed to have a doula as well as a family member or other support person at their birth. Second, making labor and delivery policies more readily accessible. Third, requiring hospitals to develop a policy for accepting transfers from out of hospital care. Fourth, strengthening language around informed consent so that the decisions are truly in the hands of person affected most, the person giving birth.

ACOG, in committee opinion 766, states that "continuous one on one support provided by support personnel, such as a doula, is associated with improved outcomes for women in labor."

Ultimately, improved outcomes and patient satisfaction are the real goals of this bill. The collective changes outlined in HB1251 are a definite move in the right direction.

We urge you to support this bill. Let's work together to improve maternity care for Maryland families.

Sincerely,

Maryland Families for Safe Birth

Kirra Brandon MD  
Evie Fielding  
Jennifer Chaffee  
Ashley Baxter

