



SB0163 Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Doula Pilot Program

Presented to the Hon. Shane Pendergrass and Members of the Health & Government Operations Committee
March 30, 2021 1:30pm

POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges the House Health and Government Operations Committee to issue a **favorable with amendments report on SB0163 Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Doula Pilot Program**, sponsored by Senator Arthur Ellis.

Our organization is an advocate for reproductive health, rights, and justice. Intrinsic to these rights is the belief that all people deserve the right to a healthy, safe, and positive pregnancy and birthing experience. While NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland honors the complexity of pregnancy in all of its forms, we recognize the legislative intent of SB0163 is for folks who are choosing to carry a pregnancy to term and give birth.

We offer the following two amendments for the committee's consideration to ensure that SB0163 is implemented and executed in a manner rooted in racial equity and reproductive justice. These amendments take into consideration the work, direction, recommendations and lived experiences of birth workers of color and the communities they service.

1. Doula Advisory Group amendment and background:

During the 2020 session, this honorable committee and the Senate Finance committee asked the Department of Health to convene the Doula Technical Assistance Advisory Group, as described in HB 1067/SB914. This advisory group, which will study barriers to doula care in Maryland and make recommendations on voluntary certification and Medicaid and private insurance reimbursement, will begin meeting in May 2021. This group includes MDH, community-based doulas, advocates, researchers and other maternal health professionals. This bill should be amended to tie in the work of the Advisory Group to the pilot program so that the two are working in unison. We propose the following amendment:

On page 5 after line 15 insert:

"SECTION 3, AND IT BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the Department of Health shall consult with the Doula Technical Advisory Group on reimbursement rates and the implementation of the Doula Pilot Program."

2. Pilot program site amendment:

On p. 4, strike lines 15-17 in their entirety.

On p. 4, line 15, insert: (D) The Department shall determine the pilot program sites based on most recently available maternal mortality statistics in Maryland.

Doulas play an essential role in improving the health and well-being of pregnant and birthing people. For these reasons, NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland **urges a favorable with amendments committee report on SB0163**. Thank you for your time and consideration.