

OUR TIME:

BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH CARE MATTERS



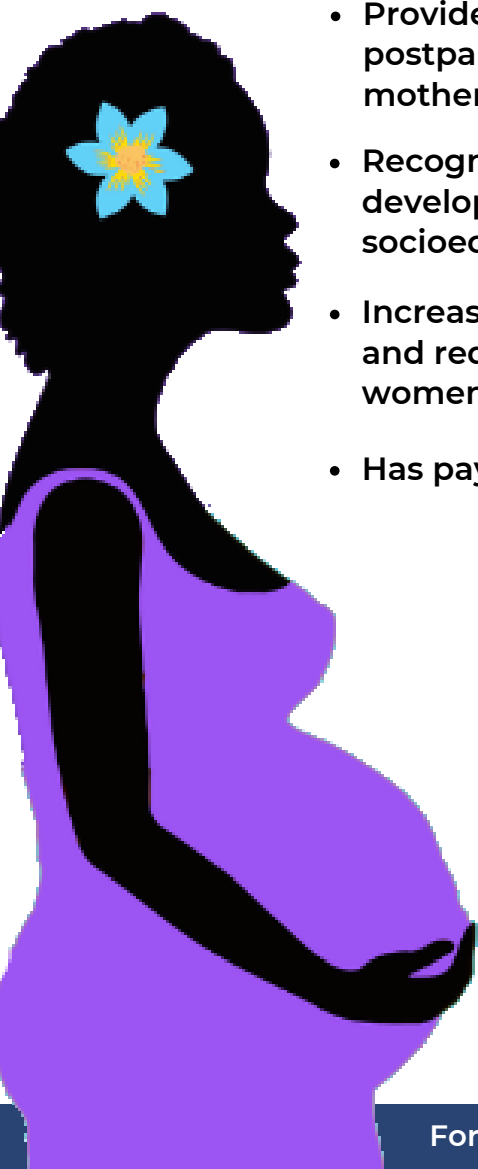
H 5609: RHODE ISLAND DOULA REIMBURSEMENT ACT.

What will the policy do?

- will make perinatal doula services eligible for coverage under Medicaid and private insurance and reimburse doulas for the care they give;
- recommends the establishment of a statewide registry of perinatal doulas;
- will NOT require any doula to be certified or meet these requirements, unless they would like to be eligible for reimbursement through insurance.

We support a policy that:

- Provides access to doula care during the prenatal, childbirth, and postpartum periods, in accordance with the needs and wishes of the mother.
- Recognizes the importance of increased training, support and capacity development for doulas, including doulas from racially, ethnically, socioeconomically and culturally diverse communities.
- Increases access to Doula care as a tool to help improve birth outcomes and reduce the higher rates of maternal morbidity and mortality among women of color in the United States.
- Has payment levels that are sufficient to support the care provided.



The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the Society for Maternal Fetal Medicine endorsed greater use of Doula Services **"one of the most effective tools to improve labor and delivery outcomes, the continuous presence of support personnel, such as a doula."**

As the state moves forward in finding innovative ways to combat health disparities, it is critical to view access to Doula Care as an important Health Equity intervention.

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What is Doula Care?

A perinatal doula is a professional trained in childbirth who provides emotional, physical, and information support to a mother who is expecting, is experiencing labor, or has recently given birth. The doula's purpose is to help women have a safe, memorable, and empowering birthing experience.

The United States has the highest rate of pregnancy- or childbirth-related deaths in the developed world.

The United States is, also, one of only 13 countries in the world where the rate of maternal mortality is now worse than it was 25 years ago.

Why we need Doula Care Health Insurance Coverage?

Studies have shown that Doula Care:

- Improves health outcomes for both mothers and babies
- Reduces spending on non-beneficial medical procedures, avoidable complications and preventable chronic conditions.
- Decreased Postpartum depression
- Reduces the likelihood of costly interventions like cesarean births and epidural pain relief.
- While increasing the likelihood of a shorter labor, a spontaneous vaginal birth, higher Apgar scores for babies and a positive childbirth experience.
- Increased use of breast feeding

Patients have reported feeling valued and having had a voice in consequential childbirth decisions.



Nationally Cesareans currently account for one of every three births. In RI, the rate Cesarean section births has increased from 26.3% in 2002 to 31.7% in 2013. Cesareans cost approximately 50 percent more than vaginal births.

- Black infants in America are now **more than twice** as likely to die as white infants — 11.3 per 1,000 black babies, compared with 4.9 per 1,000 white babies.
- Black women are **three to four times** as likely to die from pregnancy-related causes as their white counterparts, according to the C.D.C.

In Rhode Island, there has been an increase in severe maternal morbidity rates, particularly among Black women (306.0 /10,000) compared to White women (179.4/10,000).

One of the barriers to having doula support is cost. In RI, doula support is not routinely covered by health insurance.

This is a racial justice issue.

Evidence strongly suggests that providing doula support through Medicaid is likely to reduce these significant racial health disparities, which are tied to social as well as medical factors.

Put simply: a Black woman is more likely to die or suffer severe harm while pregnant because of her skin color.

The Black maternal mortality crisis is a symptom of pervasive racism and unequal treatment built into our health care system.