

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HB 158

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Hearing Date: March 16, 2021 8:00 AM

Erika Galindo

Lilith Fund for Reproductive Equity

Austin, TX

Lilith Fund supports HB158 and believes that providing doulas for medicaid recipients will only improve the quality of life for both parents and their newborns, and can help with the alarming rate of maternal mortality that Black women in Texas especially face.

Janet Dudding

Self

Bryan, TX

SUPPORT

Darline Turner, BS, MHS, PA-C, CD(DONA)

Founder and President, Mamas on Bedrest & Beyond. I am a full spectrum Community Based Doula

Austin, TX

I am writing in support of HB 158. As a doula since 2009, I educate, support, and empower childbearing families of color in Central Texas. I also develop and implement birth education curricula, and train and mentor aspiring doulas through to certification.

Maternal mortality in black women is 3-4 times maternal mortality in white women in Texas and nationwide. This disparity has persisted for over a decade. Doula support-one on one, pre and postpartum in-home care, and continuous at the bedside support during labor and delivery has been shown to reduce the rates of preterm labor, low birth weight infants, Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) admissions, and lowers the risk of infant mortality during the first year. A Training pilot I developed and implemented in 2019 had the following results:?

24 mothers served (22 African American, 2 Latinas)?

5 Labor Inductions (all African American mothers) 20.8%; 79% Texas; 24.3% US overall?

21 Normal Spontaneous Vaginal Deliveries (19 African American, 2 Latinas) 87.5% ?

3 Cesarean Sections (2 repeats, one following a failed induction. All African American) 12.5%; Texas Cesarean Section Rate is 32-35%

20 Full Term Births, or 83.3% ?

4 Preterm births (all African American) 16.7%; Texas rate for 2018 was 14.8%

2 low birth weight infants (both preterm at 35 weeks and both weighed 4lbs 6oz; both African American) 8.3%; Texas LBW in African American infants 14.1%

1 NICU admissions - a 36-week infant, preterm and low birth weight, admitted for one week. (African American) or 4.1%; Texas NICU admissions for late preterm infants is 34-39%

23/24 Breastfeeding initiation-95%; Texas African American breastfeeding initiation rate is 60% ?

No maternal or infant death, no instances of severe maternal or infant morbidity.

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Doula services can reduce maternity interventions and hence lower maternity costs. "Daily NICU costs exceed \$3,500 per infant, and it is not unusual for costs to top \$1 million for a prolonged stay." (Virtual Mentor. 2008;10(10):655-658. doi: 10.1001/virtualmentor.2008.10.10.pfor1-0810). Doula support has been shown to be so effective in the fight against maternal and infant morbidity and mortality globally, the World Health Organization issued this statement, "All women should have a doula to provide continuous support during pregnancy, and labor and delivery." ("Why having a companion during labour and childbirth may be better for you", The World Health Organization, March 18, 2019, <https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/companion-during-labour-childbirth/en/> and The WhoSafe Childbirth Implementation Guide).

The March of Dimes and Texas Department of State Health Services both report that 40-45% of babies born in Texas are born to mothers who are on Medicaid. Given the demonstrated benefits of doula support and its demonstrated cost-effectiveness, I implore The Texas DSHS and Medicaid Managed Care Organizations to strongly consider paying for doula services.

Arthur Simon

self, artist

Austin, TX

I support this bill because doula services are a critical holistic alternative to many traditional delivery services.

Anne Dunkelberg, Associate Director

Every Texan

Austin, TX

Every Texan appreciates the opportunity to express support for HB 158 by Thierry, to provide Doula services for new mothers in Texas Medicaid. Since Medicaid pays for more than half of Texas births annually, and Texas has concerning rates of maternal mortality and morbidity, improving resources for expectant and new mothers using the proven benefits of doulas can be an important option to connect these mothers with prevention and early identification of health issues.

Thank you, Anne Dunkelberg, Associate Director, Every Texan