

Testimony before the House Finance Committee
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**Testimony in Opposition to HB 96, the Proposed Substitute Budget Bill –
Limitation of Medicaid Coverage for Doula Services**

Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Dr. Marie McCausland, and I serve as the Chair of the Doula Advisory Group for the Board of Nursing.

I am a certified doula, certified lactation consultant and a two time survivor of childbirth. With my son, 7 years ago, I nearly died from Postpartum Preeclampsia; and with my daughter, 2 years ago I survived a massive hemorrhage needing blood transfusions, a Kidney infection and Pneumonia which led to sepsis, and Postpartum Preeclampsia. I had a doula for my second birth, Poppy, and I believe that she helped me to stay alive by holding my hand while I faded in and out during my hemorrhage. Every mother in this state deserves a doula but the doula coverage cap in this budget bill could leave mothers and babies empty handed.

I strongly oppose the provision in the proposed Substitute Budget Bill that limits Medicaid coverage for doula services to only six counties and caps total funding at \$500,000 per fiscal year (MCD62 Doula services).

- This bill would cover only 416 births in the whole state when there are 60,000 births each year covered by Medicaid. It's not even enough births to allow the 60 Medicaid eligible State of Ohio certified doulas we have to be able to work full-time.
- Its also impractical given providers have up to a year to file a Medicaid claim and births in Ohio peak in the summertime after a winter cooped up.
- It would deny doula coverage to any family in our major cities which have the highest number of infant deaths; cities which reside in counties that currently have the highest number of State of Ohio Certified Doulas.
- Additionally ORC 4723.89 was not updated to reflect changes made by HB238 in last years congress changing the title protection from “certified doula” to “State of Ohio Certified Doula”.

As the chair of the Doula Advisory Group, which has worked so hard to make Medicaid coverage happen, I can tell you doulas want to be able to serve medicaid clients. Doulas improve outcomes and ultimately lower costs.

I am still easily transported back to the delivery room where there were dozens of people swirling around me trying to save me and my daughter, necessary medical professionals doing what they do best. And then my husband on my right and Poppy on my left. Both still and squeezing my hands keeping me focused and from closing my eyes. Everyone there fulfilling a necessary and complimentary role that kept me and my daughter safe.

Ohio should be expanding access to doula services—not restricting it. I urge the committee to remove these harmful limitations and ensure that all families, regardless of where they live, have access to the care they need.

Thank you