

Proponent Testimony of Marie McCausland on HB 142

Families, Aging, and Human Services Committee

October 27th 2021

Chairwoman Manchester, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the House Ways and Means Committee, I thank you for the opportunity to discuss the importance of providing Doula services. My name is Marie McCausland, PhD, MPH and I am a scientist, doula and maternal health advocate living in Solon, Ohio. I have spent the last 4 years since my near-death experience with Post-Partum PreEclampsia helping mothers by sharing my story at both a local and national level and making an impact in my community with my Non Profit Mom Effect. This year, I finally listened to my calling to become a doula, and I now provide one-on-one compassionate, non-clinical care to new mothers.

Being a doula is the best job I have ever had. Hands down. You can't compare it to anything else. There is no support line, no support group, no moms group that can provide what a doula provides. Doulas provide hands on support, practical advice, and as we work with more and more families, we learn the general patterns that occur and can bring context to any new family's questions or issues. While your friends or parents may have had a few experiences to draw upon as they try to guide you or help you, doulas have worked with dozens if not hundreds or thousands of families, and have a network of other birth-workers to lean on when they see something they haven't experienced.

This kind of support is so incredibly needed and wanted by families. The statistics show that families with doulas have less cesareans, they have less perinatal mood and anxiety disorders, and they are more likely to report having had a good experience. And this makes intuitive sense. We live in a much less human connected world. So much of our lives exist online and virtually, especially since the pandemic. To have someone come and physically hold you, to put their hand on your shoulder, to clean some dishes or laundry, to just listen and hold space for you is so incredibly impactful.

And the reality is we aren't just talking about making families more comfortable, we are talking about saving lives. In Columbus you have ROOTT, which will be testifying on behalf of this bill as well,

whose peripartum support specialists and their surround care model boasts a zero percent infant mortality rate and a zero percent motherhood mortality rate. Zero! Imagine the lives we'd save if more families were able to access the quality care that organizations like ROOTT can provide through their well trained and culturally and racially congruent care model.

When I nearly died 4 years ago due to the denial and delay of care for postpartum preeclampsia, where my blood pressure peaked at 200/115, I remember watching my husband walk out of my ER room with the baby carrier with my 5 day old son to take him to his doctor appointment, thinking I may never see them again. I was terrified. I wish I hadn't had to be there alone. I wish it wasn't just me and my husband fighting for my life. I wish I had had a doula who could have been there to hold my hand and tell me everything was going to be ok when my husband and baby left me. Today I share my story in the hopes of changing things so that the next mom doesn't have to be alone and scared like I was.

I ask for you to support HB142 because doulas are an essential component to equitable and safe care for families in Ohio.

Marie McCausland, PhD, MPH