



STATE OF DELAWARE
STATE COUNCIL FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
Margaret M. O'Neill Bldg., Third Floor, Suite 1
410 Federal Street
Dover, Delaware 19901
302-739-3621


The Honorable John Carney,
Governor

John McNeal, Director
SCPD

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 27, 2023

TO: All Members of the Delaware State Senate
and House of Representatives

FROM: Mr. Benjamin Shrader, Chairperson 
State Council for Persons with Disabilities

RE: HB 80 (Proposed Amendment to Title 31 of the Delaware Code
Relating to the Coverage of Doulas)

The State Council for Persons with Disabilities (SCPD) has reviewed HB 80 which requires that doula services be covered by Medicaid in Delaware by January 1, 2024. It follows up on HB 343 from the 151st General Assembly which required the Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance to submit a plan for implementing this coverage, and draws on that completed report. SCPD has the following observations.

The proposed amendment to Title 31 is supported by many data points:

- The amendment notes that while Black women made up 28% of Delaware live births in 2019, they represent 78% of pregnancy-related fatalities over the 2017-2021 period, aligning with the national trend;
- Black women are three times more likely to experience pregnancy-related mortality than white women in the United States.
- The Maternal Mortality Review found the most common accompanying issues to infant death were those related to the provision of support in making medical decisions, the ability to access care, and effective communication with healthcare professionals.

- Doulas provide positive and nurturing environments throughout the pregnancy and birthing process and provide care “that is more informed of their patient’s experiences, values, or identities[.]”

Beginning on January 1, 2024, all entities that provide health insurance under § 505(3) of Title 31 must provide coverage of doula services including: (1) three prenatal visits of up to 90 minutes; (2) three postpartum visits of up to 90 minutes; (3) attendance through labor and birth. The amendment adds that the Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance (DMMA) “shall establish, in collaboration with stakeholders, a process for doulas to be certified and to enroll as participating providers, as well as a reimbursement rate for doula services that supports a livable annual income for full-time practicing doulas.”

Research shows that with the support and care of birth doulas, many women can “forego epidurals, avoid cesarean births, and have less stressful births.”¹ Pertinently, doula care has been found to more positively affect women who are socially disadvantaged, low income, unmarried, giving birth for the first time, are without a companion, or who experience language or cultural barriers.² Finally, doula-assisted mothers were “four times less likely to have a low birth weight [] baby [and] two times less likely to experience a birth complication involving themselves or their baby.” Given the state-wide and national statistics regarding pregnancy-related fatalities, the inclusion of doulas in insurance-coverage is a life-saving effort which will also prevent disability.

SCPD endorses this legislation.

Thank you for your consideration and please contact SCPD if you have any questions or comments regarding our position or observations on the proposed legislation.

cc: Ms. Laura Waterland, Esq.
Governor’s Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens
Developmental Disabilities Council

HB 80 Coverage of Doulas 3-27-23

¹ Kenneth J. Gruber, Susan H. Cupito, & Christina F. Dobson, Impact of Doulas on Healthy Birth Outcomes, The Journal of Perinatal Education (2013), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3647727/#>.

² *Id*