



Information Concerning SB 163
“Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Doulas”
Submitted to the Senate Finance Committee
January 26, 2021

Position: Letter of Information

Maryland Family Network (MFN) writes to share information with regard to SB 163, which would require Medicaid to provide certified doula services including childbirth education and support services and emotional and physical support during pregnancy, labor, birth, and postpartum.

MFN has worked since 1945 to improve the availability and quality of child care and other supports for children and families in Maryland. As the largest and oldest statewide child advocacy organization in Maryland, MFN is strongly committed to ensuring the health and well-being of children and pregnant women across our state.

Significant disparities in maternal health outcomes along racial lines, regardless of socio-economic status, exist both nationally and in Maryland. While evidence from other states indicates expanding access to doula care in an equitable, inclusive, and sustainable way can help reduce these racial disparities, MFN has concerns that simply requiring Medicaid to provide certified doula services might not have the intended effect.

In order to ensure Medicaid recipients have access to a diverse doula community ready to provide culturally congruent care, the State should take steps to diversify the doula care workforce by recognizing doula trainers of color, providing financial support to those who seek to become certified, and ensuring an adequate Medicaid reimbursement rate for doula care.

While Maryland Family Network honors the intentions of SB 163, we submit this letter of information for the Committee’s consideration. We welcome opportunities to further explore strategies to expand access to doulas in an effort to reduce racial disparities in maternal health outcomes.