

*Testimony submitted via email.*

Hello, my name is Raeben Nolan. I could not give my testimony verbally at the hearing today due to illness - please accept my written responses instead. I am an experienced doula, a doula trainer and President of the Oregon Doula Association. I am also the only doula representative on the Traditional Health Workers (THW) Commission and while I do not speak on behalf of the commission, my work there is relevant to my testimony.

I do support HB 2015, section 2, and the effort to raise the medicaid reimbursement for doula support to a minimum of \$350 but I don't believe that this alone will be able to remove the barriers to doulas being added to the State Traditional Health Worker Registry or the barriers to medical assistance recipients to accessing doula support.

Current Barriers:

- The Office of Equity and Inclusion is understaffed and underfunded, making it very difficult and disheartening for doulas to get approved on the State registry in a timely manner.
- The THW State registry is functionally useless - users cannot search for culturally specific doula, have no indication of the doula's availability for the patient's due date, must contact multiple doulas directly (if their contact info is even listed) before possibly finding one who may be available.
- **There is no working payment mechanism for doulas to be paid even if a medicaid recipient was able to find an available State certified doula. It does not matter how much we propose to reimburse doulas if there is no pathway for them to be paid!**
- Pregnant medicaid recipients don't know that they can ask for a doula and if they do, they run into so many dead ends that they give up looking or asking for a doula.
- Care providers don't tell medicaid patients about doulas, likely because they don't know how to access them either.

Previous Barriers:

- Before the THW OARs were revised in October of 2016, the requirements for doula trainers and individual doulas were incredibly unclear and confusing and did not conform to the actual training standards of doulas anywhere. Only one training organization even applied and very few doulas applied to the registry. After much work with the Oregon Doula Association, the THW commission recommend improved rules for doula trainings and individual doulas. The rule revision should significantly help clear up much of the confusion and problems but it will take time to finish revising all of the THW doula applications and changing the negative view that doulas in the community have of the process. **Please support the ongoing work of the THW Commission! Please engage with the Oregon Doula Association, THW Commission and the Office of Equity and Inclusion before proposing future doula or THW bills!**

Factors that I do not consider to be barriers:

- Availability of doulas. At least in the I-5 corridor, there are plenty of doulas. Portland is actually considered an over-saturated doula market. It is not the lack of trained doulas, but the lack of doulas who are willing to take on the additional hurdles of getting State certified in order to take on clients for minimal reimbursement, with no clear path for actually being reimbursed. We do need more doulas of color, multilingual doulas and rural doulas but we won't make progress in those areas unless we can address the underlying disincentives first.

I do not support the wording of section one in the amendments to HB 2015 regarding payment of "on-call" or backup doulas. It is potentially confusing and needs revision. Backup doulas who provides labor support and doula services to a birthing person in lieu of the original doula should be paid the same birth fee as the original doula. Any "on-call" fee for the original doula or backup doula needs to be more clearly articulated. If there is a workgroup on rewriting or improving this or any other parts of this bill, I would be happy to help.

I do support section four in the amendments to HB 2015 requiring CCOs to make doula information available but I don't think this can replace the State registry which still needs prioritized funding for an overhaul in order to be functional.

I support section five in the amendments to HB 2015 regarding a regular status report but would also like to see data on outcomes for doula supported births such as epidural/analgesic use rates, cesarean section rates, patient satisfaction with their birth experience, initial and 6 week breastfeeding rates, and rates for readmittance due to complications. Demographics on language and ethnicity of both the mother and doula, aggregated by outcomes, would also be ideal.

**In summary, I generally support HB 2015 but feel that the amendments need more work and input from stakeholders. I am willing to be on a workgroup or give input to support this. The lack of any straightforward payment mechanism to actually reimburse doulas is the primary barrier to overcome for any current or future legislation. I strongly encourage legislators, particularly the main sponsors - Representative Kotek, Senator Frederick, Representative Greenlic and Representative Keny-Guyer - to support the ongoing work of the THW Commission and to engage with the Oregon Doula Association for any legislation or policy regarding doulas.**

Thank you,

--

Raeben Nolan  
President,  
Oregon Doula Association  
[raeben@birthingway.edu](mailto:raeben@birthingway.edu)  
503.760.3131

