

March 20, 2023

Sen. Kelly Morrison
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 3205
St. Paul, MN 55155



Dear Sen. Morrison,

As the leadership of the Minnesota Section of the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), we strongly support increasing reimbursement rates for doula services and are thankful you are authoring SF2923.

The Minnesota Legislature made great strides in 2013 by adding doula care to the list of covered MA services but it is important to increase reimbursement rates to ensure access to these important services. Obstetrician–gynecologists, in collaboration with midwives, nurses, doulas, patients, and all others who support them in labor, can help women meet their goals for labor and birth by using techniques that require minimal interventions and have high rates of patient satisfaction.

Evidence suggests that, in addition to regular nursing care, continuous one-to-one emotional support provided by support personnel, such as a doula, is associated with improved outcomes for women in labor. ACOG released a committee report this year that specifically focused on how to help pregnant women achieve their goals for labor and the reports breaks down the numerous benefits of having a doula including:

- Shorter labors
- Less need for pain medication
- Decrease in operative deliveries (i.e. cesarean sections)
- Increased feeling of satisfaction with the labor experience
- Improved rate of spontaneous vaginal delivery
- Improved Apgar score for newborns

In addition to listing the benefits of using a doula, the author also concludes that there is no risk to having a doula present at the birth. Furthermore, given the associated decrease in cesarean births, they note that doulas are a cost-effective addition to the labor and delivery room. Since doulas have been found to have such a positive impact on birth outcomes, the article made the recommendation that more programs need to be developed in order to provide all laboring women with emotional support. It put the call out to providers and health care organizations to develop programs that will make doulas available to all women in labor.

Thank you again for taking the lead on this important issue. If you have questions for ACOG, please reach out to our consultant, Tara Erickson, at Tara@TGECConsultingmn.com.

Sincerely,

Siri Fiebiger MD, MPH
Chair, MN ACOG