



Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC)
516 West Loockerman St., Dover, DE 19904
302-739-4553 (voice) 302-739-6126 (fax) <http://www.gacec.delaware.gov>

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 26, 2024

TO: **The Honorable Melissa Minor-Brown, Delaware State House of Representatives**
The Honorable S. Elizabeth Lockman, Delaware State Senate
The Honorable Representatives Bush, Dorsey Walker, Baumbach, Harris,
Heffernan, Hilovsky, K. Johnson, S. Moore, Neal, Michael Smith

FROM: **Ann Fisher, Chairperson**
GACEC

RE: **House Bill No. 345 Medicaid Coverage for Additional Doula Visits**

The Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC) has reviewed House Bill No. 345. HB 345 provides coverage for additional postpartum doula visits (beyond the three postpartum visits of up to 90 minutes) when recommended by a practitioner or clinician acting in their school of practice. Council **endorses** the proposed legislation.

Extensive doula services is supported by many data points. House Bill 80, signed by the Governor in 2023, 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. HB 80 further notes that 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[.]" Doula care has also 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.

Given the statewide and national statistics regarding pregnancy-related fatalities, increasing the number of covered postpartum doula visits will enhance the life-saving effort of doula coverage and may also prevent disability.

Thank you for proposing this important legislation. We appreciate the opportunity to share our observations and support with you. Please feel free to contact me or Pam Weir at the GACEC office should you have any questions on our comments and any suggestions on how the GACEC may develop a more collaborative relationship with our legislators.