



Anne V. Eder; Director, Maternal  
and Child Health and Advocacy  
[aeder@marchofdimes.org](mailto:aeder@marchofdimes.org)

## **Testimony in Support of HB 1067- Doula Technical Assistance Advisory Group and Certification**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB1067, Doula Technical Assistance Advisory Group and Certification. My name is Anne Eder, and I am here today representing March of Dimes.

March of Dimes mission is to lead the fight for the health of all moms and babies. We began that fight more than 80 years ago as an organization dedicated to eradicating polio in the United States, a goal that we achieved. We continue that fight today as we work to address some of the biggest threats to moms and babies, such as premature birth and maternal mortality, through research, education, programs and advocacy.

March of Dimes ongoing work to improve maternal and infant health is more important than ever as our nation is in the midst of a dire maternal and infant health crisis. Rates of preterm birth are increasing, the United States is one of the most dangerous places to give birth in the developed world, and there are unacceptable disparities in birth outcomes between women and infants of color and their white peers. By improving the health of women before, during and between pregnancies, we are guaranteeing improved outcomes for both them and their infants.

March of Dimes supports increased access to doula care as one tool to help improve birth outcomes and reduce the higher rates of maternal morbidity and mortality among women of color in the United States. Studies suggest that increased access to doula care, especially in underserved communities, can improve a range of health outcomes for mothers and babies, lower healthcare costs, reduce c-sections and help improve communication between low-income, racially/ethnically diverse pregnant women and their health care providers. The role of doula care in reducing c-sections is important because c-sections contribute to the risk of maternal morbidity and mortality in initial and subsequent pregnancies.

Doula support is not routinely covered by health insurance. Since one of the barriers to having doula support is cost, insurance coverage for doula support through Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program, private insurance and other programs may be a way to improve birth outcomes and close the gap in birth outcomes between women of color and white women. March of Dimes advocates for all payers to provide coverage for doula services, and payment levels should be sufficient to support the care provided.

We recognize the importance of increased training, support and capacity development for doulas, including doulas from racially, ethnically, socioeconomically and culturally diverse communities. We believe that doula care can be a valuable supplement to, but not a substitute for, appropriate medical care during pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum recovery, as a doula does not serve in a clinical role. A woman must still retain insurance access to all necessary health care providers and keep a regular schedule of prenatal and postpartum medical checkups. She must also retain coverage for childbirth in a setting appropriate to meet the needs of both her and her baby.

Finally, March of Dimes supports the establishment of a Doula Technical Assistance Advisory Group to study doula programs, reimbursement, certification and training, and we welcome the opportunity to serve on this important committee.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of HB1067.