



Testimony before the Human Services Committee

Regarding SB 1078 AN ACT CONCERNING DOULA CERTIFICATION AND MEDICAID
REIMBURSEMENT FOR DOULA SERVICES.

March 21, 2019
Tekisha Dwan Everette, PhD
On behalf of
Health Equity Solutions, Inc.

Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, Senator Logan, Representative Case, and
members of the Human Services Committee,

My name is Tekisha Dwan Everette and offer this testimony in my capacity as the
Executive Director of Health Equity Solutions. Health Equity Solutions is a nonprofit
organization with a statewide focus on promoting policies, programs, and practices that result in
equitable health care access, delivery, and outcomes for all people in Connecticut. Our vision is
for every Connecticut resident to attain optimal health regardless of race, ethnicity, or
socioeconomic status.

Health Equity Solutions supports SB 1078, which aims to improve the health outcomes
for women and infants enrolled in Medicaid through the provision and coverage for doula
services. A doula is a birthing professional who provides physical and emotional support to an
individual who is pregnant, in labor, or who has recently given birth. A doula empowers the
mother to have a safe and informed birthing experience, providing comfort, care, and safety to
both the mother before, during, and after birth.

Safety for the mother and child is critically important, especially for women and infants of color (Black, Latino/Hispanic) who are experiencing dramatically worse health and mortality outcomes related to birth. Despite being a developed country with high health care expenditures per capita, the United States fares the worse in pregnancy/child birth-related death among developed nations. This is especially true for Black women are than three times as likely to die during or related to pregnancy than white women, regardless of socioeconomic status. Doula and the care they provide can improve these outcomes.

Health equity is a principle, a practice, and a way of being that allows everyone to attain their optimal health regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. This extends to and includes reproductive health. Reproductive justice demands us to remove barriers that are tied to social demographic characteristics (women of color and low-income women) that have disenfranchised, unprivileged, and oppressed people in our society. SB 1078 furthers health equity and reproductive justice by empowering women with the ability/choice to access doula services and allowing for the social, emotional, and physical support and advocacy necessary to improve health and mortality outcomes.

Thank you for your time and consideration.