

Media Clips

[S.B. 85 Medicaid Doula Services](#)

Sponsor: Sen. Luz Escamilla (D- Salt Lake)

Position: We support S.B. 85.



*Utah News
Dispatch*



Deseret News

Overview:

S.B. 85 would:

- Require the Utah Department of Health and Human Services to consult with individuals representing patients, doulas, physicians, nurses, and health care facilities to develop a Medicaid state plan amendment for adding doula coverage.
- Require the Medicaid state plan amendment for doula coverage to include both prenatal and postpartum care.

Background:

A doula is a trained professional who provides continuous physical, emotional and informational support to their client before, during and shortly after childbirth. Doulas are typically not medically trained but can have medical experience. Doulas work alongside healthcare providers in medical settings and also in their client's home.

Doulas can provide care during prenatal period, during labor and childbirth, and postpartum during the weeks after birth.

According to the National Health Law Program, as of January 2024, 13 states including Florida, Michigan, Nevada, and Oklahoma are actively reimbursing for doula services in Medicaid.¹

Medicaid state plan amendments can be designed to cover doula care as "preventive services" to make it easier to reimburse non-medical providers, including doulas, for services that are recommended by a licensed provider.

Talking Points:

- Studies show that people who work with a doula during pregnancy and childbirth are less likely to deliver a pre-term or a low birthweight baby, less likely to have postpartum depression, and more likely to try breastfeeding.²
- Many disparities negatively impact pregnancy and birth outcomes for BIPOC, people with low incomes, and other marginalized identities. Black women are 3x to 4x more likely to die from pregnancy-related issues than white women. The CDC states that 80% of these deaths are preventable and studies show that doulas play a critical role in helping combat these disparities in pregnancy.
- Medicaid covers 17% of all births in Utah.³

¹ Doula Medicaid Project, National Health Law Program, January 2024; <https://healthlaw.org/doulamedicaidproject/>

² Doula Care and Maternal Health: An Evidence Review, ASPE Issue Brief, December 2022;

<https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/dfcd768f1caf6fabf3d281f762e8d068/ASPE-Doula-Issue-Brief-12-13-22.pdf>

³ Births Financed by Medicaid, Kaiser Family Foundation (2022); <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/state-indicator/births-financed-by-medicaid>

- We support S.B. 85 because people who receive Medicaid for their pregnancy should have access to doula care to reduce complications for Medicaid pregnancies and births.
- In 2023, a similar bill from Sen. Escamilla ([S.B.192](#)) passed the Senate but failed to advance in the House.