



State and Federal Legislative Proposals Relating to Doula Care

Dhara Patel¹ and [Amy Chen](#)

Pregnancy-related deaths are [on the rise](#) in the United States. This is particularly the case for Black women, who are [three to four times](#) more likely than non-Hispanic white women to die while pregnant or within a year of childbirth. Some advocates are now pushing to help improve maternal health outcomes by expanding access to doula care. [Doulas](#) are birth companions trained to provide emotional and other nonmedical support to women before, during, and after childbirth. Research has correlated doula care with [higher breastfeeding initiation rates](#), [fewer cesarean sections](#), and [fewer low-birth weight babies](#). Doulas have also demonstrated the ability to [reduce the harmful effects of racism](#) by providing culturally appropriate, patient-centered care. These potential benefits led Minnesota and Oregon in 2014 to provide Medicaid coverage for doula services. Other state and federal legislators are now following suit by introducing bills that incorporate doulas and doula care to reduce health disparities and infant and maternal mortality and morbidity.

The following is a summary of the major state and federal legislation introduced or passed within the past ten years that have included doula services. To date, only Minnesota and Oregon have expanded access to doula services across the board for pregnant Medicaid enrollees. In Minnesota, state bills [SF 699](#) in 2013 and [SF 2057](#) in 2014 permitted Medicaid reimbursement for certain certified doulas. In Oregon, [HB 3311](#) in 2011 initiated research on the best practices for improving birth outcomes through the use of doulas. Medicaid reimbursement for doula services in Oregon began with an

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[administrative rule](#). Both were eventually incorporated into Medicaid State Plan Amendments: [Minnesota in 2014](#) and [Oregon in 2017](#). Many of these bills have increased access to doulas for incarcerated women by allowing doulas to provide prenatal and childbirth services to incarcerated women. These bills, however, typically require incarcerated women to pay for these services, which limits their impact.

For more information on this topic, please see the following National Health Law Program resources:

- [Routes to Success for Medicaid Coverage of Doula Care](#)
- [Maternal Mortality Review Committees: Step-by-Step Analysis and Action](#)
- [Using the Affordable Care Act and Other Opportunities to Address Maternal Mortality](#)

| STATE BILLS PASSED AND SIGNED INTO LAW | | | | | |
|--|---|---|-----------|------|---|
| BILL# | NAME | AUTHOR(S) | STATE | YEAR | MAJOR POINTS OF LEGISLATION |
| HF 1780 | NOTE: no title, description is the following Health and Human Services policy provisions modifications | Rep. Paul Thissen (DFL ²) and Cy Thao (DFL) | Minnesota | 2009 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modified continuing care provisions, data management, care facility contracts and reporting requirements, and reimbursement schemes • Changed the definition of doula services from support during pregnancy, labor, and postpartum to continuous support during labor and intermittently during the prenatal and postpartum periods • Added the International Center for Traditional Childbearing as an organization that could "certify" doulas |

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