



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Samra G. Brouk

## Brouk Hosts Joint Senate Hearing on Expanding Access to Doula Care

SAMRA G. BROUK March 8, 2023

| ISSUE: **BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH MONTH, DOULA CARE, MATERNAL HEALTH**

**ALBANY, NY** - State Senator Samra Brouk hosted a public hearing on Tuesday, March 7th to receive testimony on how to identify and examine best practices for integrating doulas into New York's maternal healthcare system, as well as recommendation for policies that provide sustainable Medicaid reimbursement rates for doulas. A doula is a non-clinical professional who offers physical, emotional, and informational support before, during, and after birth.

Witnesses at the hearing included doulas, advocates, and insurance providers from across the state and nation. Provided testimony contained common themes, including the role that doulas can play in addressing New York's worsening maternal health crisis, as well as addressing the racial disparities that exist in New York's maternal healthcare system. Further, witnesses shared the belief that expanding Medicaid to cover doula care is one of the strongest ways to ensure that birthing parents across the state can access the care they deserve. In New York, more than 7 million people are enrolled in Medicaid, and approximately 46% of births in New York are covered by Medicaid.

Studies show that doulas spend six to eleven times as much time with the birthing parent than clinical staff. To that end, doulas are proven to decrease the overall cesarean rate by 50% and decrease the length of labor by 25%. Birthing parents who use a doula are four times less likely to have a low birth weight baby; two times less likely to experience a birth complication; are significantly more likely to initiate breastfeeding; and are less likely to experience a maternal mental health condition like postpartum depression

Doulas play an especially important role for Black birthing people, who are five times more likely to pass away as a result of a pregnancy-related complication in New York State, and nine times more likely in New York City. In Monroe County, where Senator Brouk represents, the maternal mortality rate for all birthing people is nearly 40% higher than the statewide average, with the likelihood of several maternal morbidity being 50% higher for Black women.

“The United States is the most dangerous place in the developed world for a woman to give birth, and New York is by no means a leader in securing positive maternal health outcomes when compared to other states,” **said Senator Samra Brouk**. “We have an obligation to do everything in our power to address our state’s worsening maternal health crisis, and one of the strongest tools in our toolkit is expanding access to doula care. We must expand Medicaid coverage so that more birthing people can access this lifesaving care. New York families are counting on us”

"I am so proud to have co-chaired the first-ever hearing on incorporating doulas into our maternal healthcare delivery system with Senator Samra Brouk. New York State's maternal mortality and morbidity rates are alarming, with Black women facing more than four times the risk of mortality than white women," **said Senator Gustavo Rivera**. "New York has taken meaningful steps to address the maternal mortality emergency and this hearing sets the stage for a critical next step: adequately compensating doulas through Medicaid to expand life-saving care for low-income parents. I'm honored to work with Senator Brouk as she champions her lived experience and that of maternal care providers so we can improve birthing people's experience and outcomes throughout their pregnancy."

"Here in the US, Black women and their babies, regardless of their socioeconomic status, are disproportionately impacted by maternal mortality and bad outcomes for their infants," **said Senator Lea Webb**. "Black mothers and their families deserve better. We know that access to doulas increases safety and good outcomes for Black women both during birth and during the postpartum period. We must integrate doulas into New York's maternal healthcare system by providing sustainable Medicaid reimbursement rates so that we can make it safer for birthing people in New York to bring a child into the world."

"I thank Chairs Brouk and Rivera for holding this important hearing. Doulas play an essential role in improving maternal health outcomes and closing racial disparities in maternal healthcare," **said State Senator Julia Salazar**. "Our state and this legislature have a responsibility to increase Medicaid reimbursement rates for doulas consistent with the testimony we heard from doulas and birth workers. Every person giving birth in New York deserves to go through the process with the support of a doula, and doulas need to be well-compensated for their labor."

## 2023-S1867A

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- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
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Establishes the New York state community doula directory for doulas serving Medicaid patients

January 17, 2023

Senate Floor Calendar

Sponsored by **Samra G. Brouk**

Do you support this bill?

NAY