

**Testimony to the Senate Government Operations Committee on S.53**

**Maria Rossi, MSW, Doula**

**February 19, 2025**

Thank you for having me today.

My name is Maria Rossi. I have been a doula for 15 years and am also a social worker. I work for Washington County Mental Health Services (WCMHS) where I am the Coordinator of the Doula Project.

14 years ago, with the help of Mary Moulton, our former Executive Director, I created The Doula Project at WCMHS. The Doula Project provides prenatal, birth and postpartum doula support to our community members who receive Medicaid assistance. My experience running this program allows me to speak to the unique needs of the Medicaid population as well as the doulas who serve them.

I have also co-founded our statewide doula group, the Doula Association of Vermont (DAV). I am here today representing DAV.

DAV wholeheartedly supports OPR's Sunrise Report on certifying Community Based Doulas in Vermont. DAV worked closely with OPR with their Sunrise study process. They were incredibly collaborative in their work. OPR proactively reached out to ensure there was community engagement. As a result, we were able to support families to share their experiences, shared our training and experiences as doulas, and provided relevant data and studies done in other states. 25 states are implementing or have already done so, giving us an opportunity to learn from them. We found OPR to be thoughtful, thorough, and committed, and the Doula Sunrise Study reflects that.

DAV supports the findings and recommendations of The Doula Sunrise study, and we ask that you support this bill this year.