

To: House Health and Human Services Committee

From: Emmy Carragher

Date: March 12, 2025

Re: House Bill 5861 - Insurance Coverage of Licensed Certified Lactation Counselors

Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony today. Thank you to Representatives Stewart, Fogarty, McGaw, Cruz, and Casimiro for sponsoring this bill.

My name is **Emmy Carragher** and I'm writing in support of House Bill 5861. This bill requires insurance coverage of the services of Licensed Certified Lactation Counselors.

This work is personal to me, my children, my spouse, and my entire proverbial village of support. I have been fortunate enough to have had the opportunity to work with a licensed CLC after the births of both of my children, and in both cases, the access to this support has been essential.

My first son was born with a tongue tie, reflux, and an underdeveloped esophagus. I was overwhelmed with the steps I would need to take to support and feed my child, and only through the help of a CLC was I able to assess the issue, make a plan for care, and still maintain my plan to breastfeed him throughout the process.

Because I learned first hand of the impact access to a CLC can have, I sought out this support immediately after the birth of my second son, and was able to breastfeed him directly from birth.

If I didn't have access to this essential support as a new mother, I would have been completely lost on how to best help my child while still maintaining my own lactation goals.

Even beyond my own personal story, I know countless others of women who have needed the lifeline a CLC offers in those early days of postpartum depression to navigate so much unknown.

I urge you to pass House Bill 5861 to require insurance coverage of the services of Licensed Certified Lactation Counselors to improve Rhode Islanders' access to lactation support and to ensure every birthing parent has the right and the choice to feed their baby how they best see fit. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.