

To: House Health and Human Services Committee

From: Julia Johnstone

Date: March 13, 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 **Julia Johnstone** and I'm writing in support of House Bill 5861. This bill requires insurance coverage of the services of Licensed Certified Lactation Counselors.

Insurance coverage for Licensed CLCs' services would have changed my breastfeeding journey drastically. As a new mom, there are already so many obstacles that we face in trying to connect with our newborns. I was lucky enough to have doula care (covered by insurance!!) and a support system to reach out to when I was experiencing breastfeeding difficulties. I know many other parents who do not have the resources I did that would benefit greatly from this coverage. Everyone deserves this option. Lactation consultants visit maybe only once while in the hospital, only hours after going through a physiological and emotional world-changing experience, it does not provide the opportunity to receive advice long after you leave the hospital, a time when it is most needed.

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 help parents receive the assistance and support they deserve. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.