

Steven Sepe

From: Latisha Michel <latishamichel@readysetlatchgo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 12, 2025 11:27 PM
To: House Health and Human Services Committee
Subject: Testimony in Support of H.5861 – Certified Lactation Counselor Insurance Reimbursement

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Latisha Michel, and I am a Certified Lactation Counselor (CLC), certified by the Academy of Lactation Policy and Practice. I currently reside in Newport, Rhode Island, and proudly serve my community as the founder of Ready Set Latch Go. I am writing in strong support of H.5861, which would require insurance coverage for services provided by licensed Certified Lactation Counselors.

For the past six years, I have worked as a CLC supporting families across Rhode Island. In my role, I provide critical services including individualized lactation assessments, the development of care plans tailored to each family's needs, education on breastfeeding, ongoing support and follow-up. When necessary, I also refer clients to other healthcare professionals to ensure they receive comprehensive, wraparound care.

The families I serve come from diverse backgrounds—economically, racially, and culturally. Many face barriers to accessing high-quality, culturally responsive lactation support. For them, the guidance of a trusted CLC can be the difference between continuing their breastfeeding journey or giving up prematurely due to lack of support. I meet families where they are, providing compassionate care in homes, community centers, and virtually, depending on their needs.

Lactation support is not a luxury—it is a necessity. It improves infant and maternal health outcomes, supports bonding, and reduces healthcare costs in the long run by decreasing risks of infections, chronic disease, and postpartum complications. When lactation support is accessible and affordable, breastfeeding rates increase, especially among communities historically marginalized in healthcare settings.

Yet, many families go without this essential support simply because services provided by Certified Lactation Counselors are not reimbursed by insurance. This creates inequity and puts an undue financial burden on families at a time when they are already navigating the emotional and physical demands of new parenthood.

By passing H.5861, we can take a meaningful step toward health equity in Rhode Island. Ensuring reimbursement for CLCs will expand access to quality lactation care, increase breastfeeding rates, and promote better health outcomes for parents and babies across our state.

I urge you to support H.5861 and make lactation support a covered, accessible service for all families.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

With gratitude,

Latisha Michel [she/her pronouns] RI Certified Perinatal Doula, CLC, CBE, CHW, Maternal Child Health Specialist
Founder of Ready Set Latch Go, LLC



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"Birth isn't something we suffer, but something we actively do and exult in"