

To: House Health and Human Services Committee
From: Paulette Butler CLC, CPD
Date: March 13, 2025

Re: H5861: Insurance Coverage for Licensed Certified Lactation Counselors

Hello Chair Donovan, Vice-Chair Giiraldo, Vice-Chair Potter and distinguished members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services,
My name is Paulette Butler and I'm a Certified Lactation Counselor (CLC), certified by the Academy of Lactation Policy and Practice. I currently live in North Smithfield, Rhode Island. I want to express my support of H.5861 – relating to insurance and the coverage of services provided by licensed CLCs.

In my work as a CLC, I provide lactation support for breastfeeding families including prenatal breastfeeding education, individualized assessments postpartum, offering guidance and evidence-based solutions to breastfeeding challenges, making referrals, if needed, to health care providers and providing follow-up care to the families I work with.

I work in Rhode Island as a sole proprietor, providing doula support for the past 11 years. Nine years ago I took CLC training, and it has become my passion. I enjoy the continuing education opportunities, participating in webinars and conferences, and of course helping families with their breastfeeding goals.

There is empirical data and consensus that breastfeeding provides significant benefits to mothers and babies as well as health care savings. There is a further consensus that breastfeeding rates are lower than optimal. Research has demonstrated that lactation support providers have a positive effect on breastfeeding initiation and continuation rates, particularly when a lactation support provider lives in, or is from, the same race and ethnic background as the individual seeking support.

Lactation support must be covered by health insurance in order to allow equitable access to all families in Rhode Island. Most families cannot afford to pay out of pocket to see a lactation support professional, especially when, more often than not, more than one visit is required in order to address breastfeeding concerns. For these reasons, I'm writing to request that the Committee vote favorably on H.5861 in order to help families who are breastfeeding their babies here in Rhode Island.

Thank you for your time, and thank you to the bill sponsor, Representative Stewart, for introducing such important legislation.

Sincerely,

Paulette Butler CLC, CPD
NightLight Doula
5 Hillview Ave. North Smithfield, RI 02896
paulette618@gmail.com