

Rhode Island General Assembly

To: House Health and Human Services Committee

From: Quatia Osorio BSBA BSHSM SPM CLC CCHW MCHS CPE

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 **Quatia Osorio** and I am a Certified Lactation Counselor (CLC). I have been a CLC since 2016 serving the community 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 Certified Lactation Counselors is crucial to address our most vulnerable population, as well as birthing people. What we know from our health department is breastfeeding decreases poor health outcomes for both baby and Mother. We know the benefits of the first live antibiotic food for babies, created by their Mothers, but there are benefits beyond physiological for baby. The benefits for the birthing person include but are not limited to a decrease in breast cancer, ovarian cancer, and better mental health. Partners are able to support both Mother/Birthing Person and baby, as well as contribute to the family dynamic as well. Breastfeeding is about the whole family and every successful breastfed baby includes supportive, nourishing and caring environment.

The RIDOH and community leaders are working together and in their own efforts they are adamantly working on better health outcomes with the Statewide Strategic Breastfeeding Plan for the State of Rhode Island, including the expansion and diversification of the lactation workforce. We are collectively, as a community supporting those efforts in our advocacy, to support little growing bodies and expanding families.

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. Personally, I have been working the effort for CLCs since 2019 due to the inadequacy of community support for families with basic breastfeeding/lactation needs to support their decision to breastfeed. I have held a local breastfeeding support group since 2017, trained well over 100 doulas in lactation education, and even supported the opening of a local pasteurized donor milk bank to support the duration of breastfeeding for families who do not want formula.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

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