



PRESS RELEASE

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House Gives Final Passage to Bill to Study the Use of Doulas in Improving Maternal Health *House Bill 3311B Defines and Encourages the Use of Doulas*

Salem, Ore. — Infant mortality among African-Americans in Oregon is two times higher than that of Caucasians. Studies show that African-American women are less likely to receive adequate maternal care, and as a result, have higher incidences of infant mortality and premature births.

Today, HB 3311B, which directs the Oregon Health Authority to investigate how doulas can improve birth outcomes for women with disproportionately poor birth outcomes, was sent to Governor Kitzhaber's desk for signing. After the House concurred on Senate amendments, the bill, sponsored by Representatives Tina Kotek (D-North and Northeast Portland) and Lew Frederick (D-Northeast Portland), is a step closer to becoming law.

"Doulas provide critical support for moms before, during and after birth," said Representative Kotek. "Doulas help bring down costs in the health care system, by helping moms stay healthy and keeping their babies healthy."

Ilesha Johnson, who gave birth to her daughter on May 24th says, "I moved to Portland six-months pregnant and alone. I learned of a volunteer doula program at the International Center for Traditional Childbearing. My doula helped during my pregnancy with transportation, foot massages, a listening ear and resources. She provided labor support, advocated for my birth plan and she stayed with me until the birth of my daughter. And she helped me after the birth with breastfeeding and parenting assistance. I highly recommend working with doula."

This bill was introduced in collaboration with the International Center for Traditional Childbearing. HB 3311B defines doulas as: "a birth companion who provides personal, nonmedical support to women and families throughout a women's pregnancy, childbirth and post-partum experience."

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