

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 4

By Lamar

A RESOLUTION to recognize doulas as vital members of the childbirth team and acknowledge their positive effect on maternal and infant mortality disparities.

WHEREAS, a doula is defined as a trained, non-medical person who provides physical, emotional, and educational support before, during, and after childbirth; and

WHEREAS, according to the Maternal Mortality Review and Prevention Committee's 2017 and 2018 report, forty-six Black women died while pregnant or within one year of pregnancy in Tennessee, and 100 percent of these pregnancy-related deaths were preventable; and

WHEREAS, according to that same report, Black women in Tennessee are three times more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications than white women; and

WHEREAS, the 2018 Tennessee Justice Center Infant and Maternal Mortality brief states that in 2015, Black infants had twice the mortality rate of white infants; and

WHEREAS, as it currently stands, most doula care is not a covered healthcare service in most states, and clients are forced to pay out of pocket; people with low income and communities of color, who would benefit the most, are left without access, creating a noticeable health disparity; and

WHEREAS, pregnant and postpartum people receiving doula care have been found to have improved health outcomes for themselves and their infants, including higher breastfeeding initiation rates, fewer low birthweight babies, and lower rates of cesarean births; and

WHEREAS, doulas offer a unique opportunity for healthcare systems to reduce workloads for nurses and frontline providers with many simultaneous responsibilities, retain

patients for future pregnancies and other services, and attract new patients by providing a unique, valuable service; and

WHEREAS, the benefits of doula care can also have a financial impact in helping families and the State avoid the cost associated with low birthweight babies, cesarean births, and other pregnancy-related complications; and

WHEREAS, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, area hospitals in Nashville, Knoxville, and Chattanooga amended their visitor policies from prohibiting all visitors, to allowing a professional or certified doula to be present during childbirth, thus recognizing their essential nature; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we recognize that doulas are both vital childbirth team members and community health workers and acknowledge their contribution in ending maternal and infant health disparities.