

HB1464

March 5, 2025-1 pm

Senator Lee and Members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

I am providing my personal testimony to support HB1464.

My name is Candi Smith. I am an enrolled member of the Osage Nation. I am a Registered Nurse and International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC). I took the DONA International Postpartum doula training workshop in June of 2024. I recently completed the additional training that is required by DONA and have submitted my packet for review of certification.

I was hired by Indigenous Association to organize three different trainings this past year that would focus on recruiting Indigenous women to allow for Indigenous doulas to provide doula services for Indigenous families. We offered free trainings through grants to 43 individuals that stated in their application they were Indigenous or work with Indigenous communities. Of the 43 individuals 36 were Indigenous.

I hired Tracy McPhillips the Postpartum DONA trainer for several reasons but, mostly because she was excited to work with the Indigenous trainees. She agreed to travel to Fargo ND from the Seattle area. Prior to hiring her she understood we wanted to incorporate our own cultural traditions and knowledge into our training. Our DONA trainer recognizes the health disparities that many Indigenous families face. Several times during the training we adapted the workshop to support and share our individual beliefs. This included a wonderful presentation by an Indigenous woman on Indigenous Spirituality and birth practices. Tracy continues to have this Indigenous woman present at her trainings.

Dona has 11 board members of which 6 are women of color. One of the board members is Ameilia Garcia. She is the director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and in her bio states that she is a descendant of the Apache and Mayan tribes.

Beyond believing DONA is culturally aware of our training needs, I am proud to have trained under this organization as it has proved to be reputable. Looking at other states that provide Medicare reimbursement, all of them reimburse Certified DONA doulas.

*“DONA International’s primary function is to provide excellent doula education and certification to a diverse population of doulas world-wide. DONA International promotes the highest quality perinatal support for pregnant, birthing, and postpartum people and their families by setting the standard for doula education and training, and by advocating the research-based benefits of doula care.”*

Founded in 1992, DONA International has continued to grow and change with the needs of families around the world. DONA International answered the demand for postpartum support by creating postpartum doula certification in 2003. DONA focuses on continuing to evolve its training curriculum to incorporate the global diversity of families. DONA trains doulas to meet the needs of the family based on advocacy, evidence, cultural practices and safety. DONA International abides by a Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice that clearly states limits of practice, such as not providing medical care and commitment to the client. It also states the ethical responsibility to colleagues and the doula profession, including ethical responsibility to society. <https://www.dona.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Updated-COESOP-2020-FINAL-Postpartum.pdf>

I approve this bill to support reimbursement of doulas in ND. While this bill's original intent was to cover doulas under Medicaid, DONA was the organization chosen for its reputation of being Medicaid reimbursable in all the other states that reimburse doula services. I fully acknowledge that there are other reputable postpartum training organizations and as the proposed bill 1464 states "The department may designate additional doula certification organizations." Whatever certifying organizations the committee considers, please examine what organizations have a Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics.

I want our North Dakota families to receive doula care from individuals that trained in workshops that are evidence based and culturally supported. The postpartum period is a sensitive time for families, and they deserve to be cared for by doulas that trained under a comprehensive training program such as DONA that includes a workshop, experiences and evaluations from working with families in their home, and additional coursework that prepares them to be confident to work with families as they transition to parenthood.

Thank you for your consideration,

Candi Smith MAS, RN, IBCLC