



# North Dakota House of Representatives

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Committees:  
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Human Services

## House Bill 1464

### House Human Services Committee

#### Testimony of Rep. Gretchen Dobervich, Bill Sponsor

February 3, 2025

Good morning Chairman Ruby and Members of the House Human Services Committee. For the record my name is Representative Gretchen Dobervich, I work for the people of District 11 in Fargo. I am here today to introduce House Bill 1464, which seeks to establish postpartum doula certification and Medicaid coverage for postpartum doula services in North Dakota.

This bill recognizes the critical role doulas play in supporting parents and newborns during the postpartum period, the first six months after birth. Research consistently shows that doula care improves maternal mental health, reduces postpartum depression, and enhances infant outcomes by providing continuous physical, emotional, and educational support. By extending these services up to six months postpartum, we are addressing a vulnerable time when many parents experience challenges related to recovery, bonding, and breastfeeding.

House Bill 1464 ensures that doulas providing care meet established professional standards by requiring certification through Doulas of North America or another professional, reputable doula organization determined by the NDDHHS in the administrative rule making process. This will help maintain quality while expanding access to trained professionals who can support North Dakota families.

Additionally, the inclusion of postpartum doula services under Medicaid ensures that all parents—regardless of income—have access to this vital care. Many states have already implemented similar measures, recognizing the cost-effectiveness of doulas in reducing medical interventions, improving birth outcomes, and supporting family well-being. Included in my online testimony is a tracking document of Medicaid coverage of doula services in other states. By passing this bill, North Dakota will join a growing number of states prioritizing maternal and infant health through evidence-based policy.

The NDDHHS Medical Services Division Director, Community Engagement Unit Associate Director and Foundation for a Healthy North Dakota were consulted and provided input in the development of this bill. There is a fiscal note of \$280,800 for the biennium. The amount assumes 30 certified doulas providing 3 one-hour visits per patient at a fee of \$15 per 15-minute unit.

It was suggested to me that doulas not be subject to a licensing/certification fee by the NDDHHS. These fees are typically used to cover the costs of administrating a program. Program administrative costs appear to already be covered by other funding in the fiscal note. Therefore, I recommend the House Human Services Committee consider an amendment to HB 1464 that the NDDHHS will not impose a licensing or certification fee requirement in addition to those post-partum doulas pay to Doulas of North America or another professional, reputable doula organization determined by the NDDHHS in the administrative rule making process.

I urge you to support House Bill 1464 to strengthen maternal care, reduce disparities, and provide families with the essential support they need during the critical postpartum period. Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.