

New York Coalition for Doula Access



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Dear Colleagues,

Best wishes for a very Happy Holiday to all of you and your families! I hope that 2011 was a fruitful year for your organizations and that the important work you are engaged in will continue to flourish in the New Year.

On behalf of the New York Coalition for Doula Access, I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you and your organization again for your endorsement of the Medicaid Reimbursement for Doulas Project. Our hearts were warmed by the overwhelming support shown by our sister organizations. Forty-one of you added your group's name to the letter requesting Medicaid funding for doula care. We delivered our letter to the entire Medicaid Redesign Team and to the members of the Basic Benefit Review Work Group and the Health Disparities Work Group. We also sent the letter directly to Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and to James Introne, his chief advisor in this matter.

We wanted to let you know that our request, while respectfully and thoughtfully received, was not ultimately added to the Medicaid Redesign Team's list of recommendations. We came into the process relatively late, and there were many proposals competing for attention, some promoted by very powerful groups. However, we were heartened by the interest the state Department of Health showed in our proposal, especially in the effect of doulas on Cesarean section rates.

Going into this process, we were aware that we faced an uphill battle, given the current financial crisis and the state's need to dramatically cut Medicaid funding. Regardless, we saw this as an important opportunity to introduce the benefits of doula care to a body of policymakers who will go on beyond this moment to make critical health-care decisions for the citizens of New York State. We are hopeful that we have planted seeds in strategic places and that these initial efforts will lead us to a future where doulas are available to every woman in New York State who wants and needs one.

We do intend to continue advocating for the rights of New York families to obtain doula care. We will continue educating policymakers, the media, medical providers, and the public about the incredible health benefits of doula care. We welcome any ideas or opportunities for collaboration you may have that would help to move this work forward.

With deep gratitude and best wishes,

Élan McAllister
Representative, New York Coalition for Doula Access
President, Choices in Childbirth