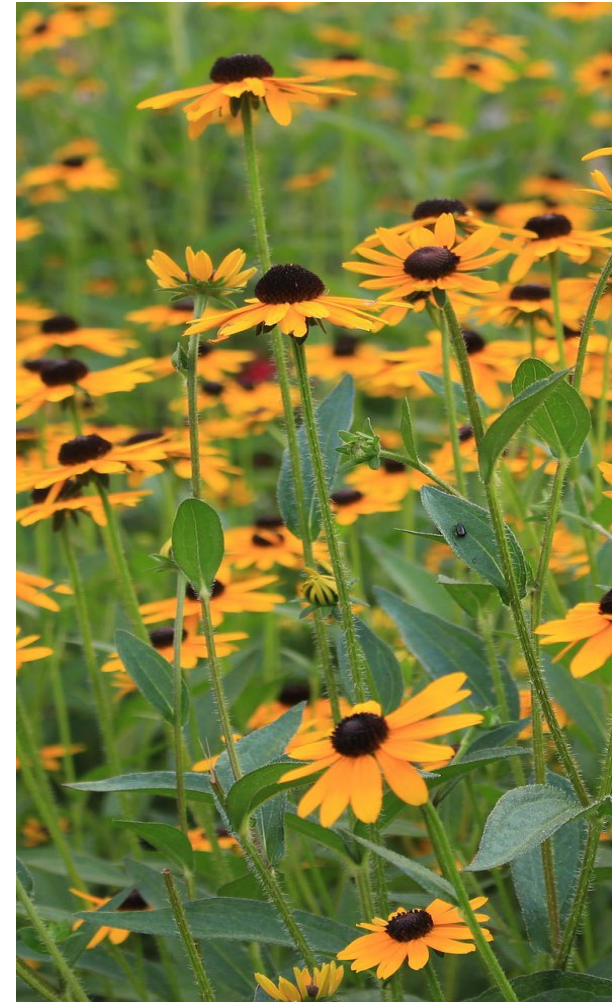# Utilization Trends in Medicaid-Reimbursed Doula Services and Out-of-Pocket Cost Savings in Maryland

Leigh Goetschius, PhD
AcademyHealth ARM
June 30, 2024
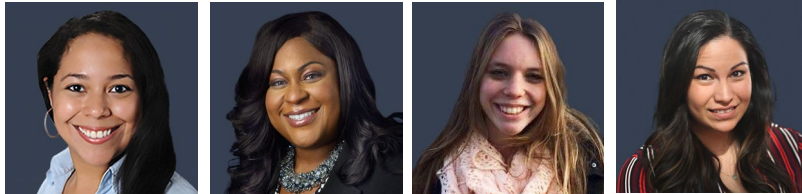
# Thank you!

## Collaborators

MedStar Health Research Institute

### Community Partners

The Hilltop Institute UMBC
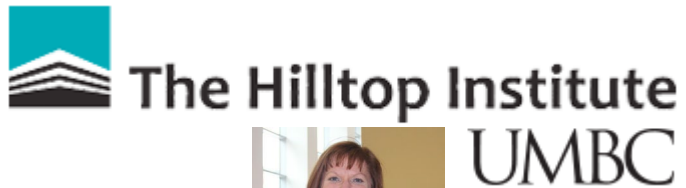
**Our Amazing Community Advisory Board!**

## Funding

**Research in Transforming Health and Health Systems**
Grant# 80681

AcademyHealth

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

## Other Support

Maryland DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

MedStar Health

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# Doula Care to Address Disparities in Maternal Health

**Doulas→ non-clinical health care personnel**

- Physical, emotional, and informational support before, during, after birth

**Doula care → improved outcomes in low-income and BIPOC birthing parents**

- Birthing person (e.g., ↓ c-section rates)
- Infant (e.g., ↓ pre-term birth rates)

**Barriers to utilization of doula care**

- Cost of services, not covered by insurance
- Doula training requirements, available workforce

Knocke et al., 2022, *ASPE*; Kozhimannil et al., 2013, *Am J Public Health*;
Ogunwole et al., 2022, *Women's Health Issues;* Safon et al., 2021, *Health Affairs Forefront*

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# Medicaid Coverage of Doula Services

**Medicaid coverage of doula services:**

- 13 states + DC as of Jun 2024

- Varying program features (i.e., services covered, reimbursement amounts, training requirements)

- Strategy for ↓ maternal health disparities & ↑ maternal health, but no systematic evaluation

**Maryland Medicaid Doula Program (MMDP)**

- Started Feb 2022

- Covers doula support during labor/delivery + 8 visits (prenatal or postpartum)

https://healthlaw.org/doulamedicaidproject/
https://health.maryland.gov/mmcp/medicaid-mch-initiatives/Pages/DoulaProgram.aspx

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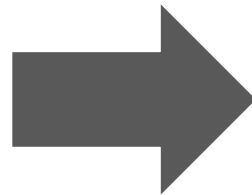
# Research Question & Methods

## Analysis of Maryland Medicaid Data

Encounters with a HCPCS code for doula service

Dates: Feb 2022 – Mar 2024

Cost Data: MMDP program manual & doulamatch.net

**Doula Service Utilization**
*Who is using MMDP services, when are they being used, and where?*

**Out-of-Pocket (OOP) Cost Savings**
*How much are birthing parents saving relative to self-pay and Medicaid?*

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# Birthing People Using Doula Services

| | MMDP Doula Sample | All Medicaid Births* |
|---|---|---|
| **Total Birthing Parents (N)** | 84 | 27,579 |
| **Race & Ethnicity (%)** | | |
| **Black** | 71% | 44% |
| **Other Racial & Ethnic Groups#** <br> *Includes Hispanic, White, Asian, American Indian* | 29% | 56% |
| **Mean Age in Years (SD)** | 30.95 (5.10) | 28.70 (6.08) |

*Demographic data for all Maryland Medicaid births from CDC Wonder
#Individual group percentages suppressed due to small cell sizes (<11 people)

| Neighborhood Characteristic+ | Median | Min | Max |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Relative Population Density (More Urban)** | 0.63 | 0.04 | 0.99 |
| **Social Vulnerability Index** | 0.60 | 0.02 | 0.99 |

+At the census tract level; on a 0-1 scale relative to other Maryland census tracts

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# Doula services were used across the perinatal period & in multiple settings.
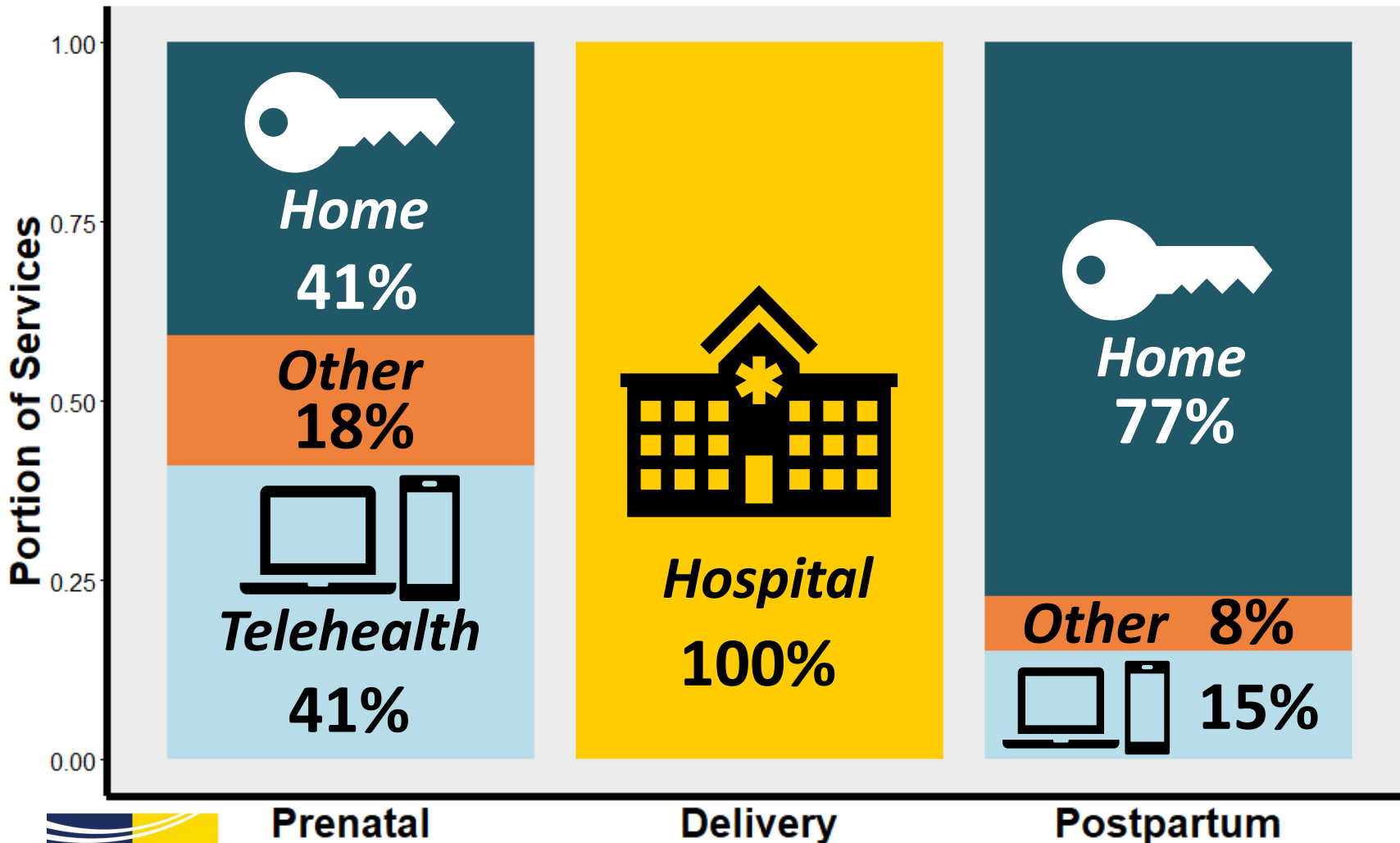


## First Encounter:
September 2022

| Service | N (%) |
|---|---|
| Prenatal | 188 (60) |
| Delivery | 32 (11) |
| Postpartum | 92 (29) |
| **Total** | **313** |

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# Out-of-Pocket Cost Savings for Birthing Parents, but Differential Reimbursement Rates

| Service | Self-Pay Rate | | | Medicaid Rate | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Median | Min | Max | Median | Min | Max |
| Prenatal | $94.27 | $47.14 | $377.08 | $132.96 | $16.62 | $531.84 |
| Delivery | $1,413.34 | $1,413.34 | $1,413.34 | $800.00 | $300.00 | $800.00 |
| Postpartum | $94.27 | $47.14 | $565.63 | $156.96 | $39.24 | $941.76 |

| Service | Self-Pay Rate | Medicaid Rate |
|---|---|---|
| Prenatal | **$47.14**/visit | Up to **$66.48/visit** ($16.62/unit, max 4 units/visit) |
| Delivery | **$1413.34** | **$800** (initially $300) |
| Postpartum | **$47.14**/visit | Up to **$78.48/visit** ($19.62/unit, max 4 units/visit) |
| **Max Total** | $1,790.46 | $1,331.84 – $1,427.84 |

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# Results Summary

## Birthing parents using doula services

- Predominantly Black
- Live in more urban neighborhoods with higher levels of social vulnerability

## Services used across perinatal period

- Delayed uptake
- Telehealth used more during prenatal period
- Postpartum services primarily used at home

## OOP savings for birthing parents

- Benefits birthing parents
- Reimbursement rate differences
- Deeper understanding & context from community feedback

**Access for communities with historically lower use of doula care who experience poor maternal health outcomes due to systemic inequities**

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# Next Steps

**Build on current conclusions and interpretations based on expertise from the community:**

- Community advisory board
- Community forum

**Continue evaluating other research questions from full grant:**

- Qualitative interviews with key informants about their experiences with the MMDP
  - Doulas, policy & practice leaders, Medicaid-insured birthing parents
- Impact of MMDP on racial disparities in maternal & infant health outcomes

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