

March 16, 2020

My name is Dr. Hayley Bos, and I am the medical director for maternity services in VIHA, and the Site medical director for operations at Victoria General Hospital.

Congratulations on the soon to be arrival of your new baby. This is a very special and exciting time. I can understand your frustration with the hospital policy change. Unfortunately, as you are aware, we are currently in a global pandemic. Hospitals and Health Authorities have been tasked with the difficult decisions to alter normal practices with the goal to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

First and foremost, I want to make it clear that this decision was not made lightly. I can express on behalf of the perinatal care providers that we consider doulas to be valued members of the care team. Women benefit from their support, not just during the intrapartum period. We value the education they provide antenatally, the reassurances they provide early in labour and the much-needed support they provide in the postpartum period. We did not make this decision with a goal to limit the scope of their care.

You may be aware, that the AWHONN (Association of Women's Health, Obstetrics and Neonatal Nurses) had a statement in support of excluding Doulas from visitor restrictions. While I understand the intention of the AWHONN statement, I would remind you that is an American association, and the public health response in our country has been very different than what we are seeing in the United States. Our own national society, the SOGC (Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologist of Canada) is supportive of limiting the number of people in patient rooms.

Stopping the spread of COVID-19 must be our top priority. This change is in keeping with the Provincial Health Officer's recommendations on social distancing, and is intended to keep both our patients and our staff safe. As the goal of social distancing is important, I hope that you can support this plan, and look at alternatives. We welcome the presence of your doula or additional support people through digital communication. You will see in the near future, many aspects of health care will be moving in this direction.

I feel it is important to highlight that safe care for all of our patients, moms and babies, is a priority. If our public health measures are effective, and the viral load in the community does not increase, we will be happy to reassess our policies and lift some restrictions as soon as safely possible. However, for the public health policies to be truly effective, they need to be applied fairly and consistently. This requires a standard approach to all of our women, to ensure a safe

care environment. Therefore, this policy will remain enacted until the significant risk to the community has decreased. As soon as it is safe to do so, we will allow additional support persons for our patients. Until that time, I want to thank you for your understanding and support as we, as a community and health care facility, work diligently to ensure access to the highest levels of safe and comprehensive care, even during a global pandemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized loop followed by a horizontal line that ends in a small arrowhead. The name "Bos" is written in a smaller, cursive font below the main signature.

Hayley Bos, MD, OBGYN FRCPC MPH, Johns Hopkins School of Public Health  
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