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Over 150 State Legislators sign letter to call on the Senate to enact permanent and mandatory postpartum Medicaid investments in Build Back Better Act

WASHINGTON, D.C. - 152 state legislators across 38 states sign in solidarity to encourage congressional leadership to include permanent and mandatory postpartum Medicaid coverage for one year in the Build Back Better Act.

Extension of postpartum Medicaid coverage is critical to the health of many: nearly half of births in the U.S. are covered by Medicaid. Further, approximately 33% of pregnancy-related deaths occur within a week to a year after birth, disproportionately impacting Black and Indigenous women. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 60% of maternal deaths are preventable. Despite this, only nineteen states have opted to voluntarily extend postpartum Medicaid coverage to 12 months without any additional eligibility criterion for the extended coverage. This varied uptake has resulted in disparate access to postpartum care across the nation. It is critical that Congress enact permanent and mandatory postpartum Medicaid coverage for one year to ensure more equitable care, regardless of zip code.

Congress must seize the opportunity to ensure quality healthcare access for pregnant and postpartum individuals in every state across the nation. Through a mandatory provision on postpartum Medicaid, state officials can work to meet the needs of women and birthing people in the critical postpartum period. See the full text of the letter here. See what state legislators have to say about why permanent and mandatory postpartum Medicaid coverage for one year is critical to advancing healthcare in their state:

“As a labor doula practicing in hospitals during the COVID-19 pandemic, I can attest to the strength of growing families and will assert that they deserve to be respected by the state of Georgia’s Medicaid system in the form of postpartum support.” - State Representative Park Cannon, Georgia

“Despite studies that show that extending postpartum Medicaid coverage for one year would help address the maternal mortality crisis in Georgia, politics has gotten in the way and the coverage was only extended for six months. While six months is better than what was offered previously, it still falls short of addressing the issue to our fullest potential. This crisis, which disproportionately affects black women here in Georgia and across the country, deserves more than the bare minimum. That is why I support addressing maternal mortality by adding postpartum Medicaid extension into the Build Back Better Act.” - State Representative Jasmine Clark, Georgia

“True Reproductive health justice requires opportunities and access to health care before, during and after pregnancy. It is clear where we have fallen short in the past and where we should make fixes to provide complete and effective coverage for those who need it most. Postpartum Medicaid Extension- coverage for up to one year after giving birth- is necessary for birthing people, families, and communities to thrive regardless of the state in which they live. I join with my counterparts from around the country in urging Congress to take this seriously.” - State Representative Kam Buckner, Illinois
“I struggled with postpartum depression after the birth of my twins, and now how much harder that makes being present for your little ones. If we are serious about making sure our children have healthy early childhoods, then we must support mothers as they recover from their pregnancies and nurture their babies.” - **State Representative Rebecca Millett, Maine**

“With infant mortality amongst African American babies in the state of MS and MS African American mothers giving birth have the highest death rate in the nation, I stand strong with President Biden in expanding Medicaid. With this we ensure healthier babies and healthier mothers. This saves lives.” - **State Representative Sonya Williams Barnes, Mississippi**

“You cannot put a deadline on people experiencing complications and morbidities postpartum because everyone's experience is deeply personal. Sixty days is not enough,” said New York State Assemblymember Jessica González-Rojas. "Our communities of color, women and people who give birth deserve a lot more than that. I join my colleagues in government across the nation in calling on Congress to enact permanent and mandatory postpartum Medicaid coverage for one year. Our bodies are not just machines for reproduction. Treat us with the respect we deserve.” - **Assembly Member Jessica González-Rojas, New York**

“NC has a high infant mortality rate. This extended coverage would help address that unfortunate reality and allow for healthy mothers and infants.” - **State Senator Natasha Marcus, North Carolina**

“Pregnancy puts a body under extreme stress and can cause serious health issues, including silent killers like high blood pressure, that need to be closely monitored after childbirth. But right now, Medicaid coverage for new mothers ends just two months after a baby is born. Mothers are suffering. North Carolina ranks 30th in the country for its maternal mortality rates. Extending Medicaid coverage for a full year postpartum would drastically improve maternal health outcomes and save lives in our state and nationwide.” - **State Representative Julie von Haefen, North Carolina**

“Ohio did the right thing by extending postpartum Medicaid coverage for birthing individuals to one year. We know, however, that this change is not permanent nor mandatory. We must recognize that ensuring new mothers have access to healthcare is critical for so many reasons, including to prevent and treat both physical and mental health conditions and advance health equity. Simply put - we stand to lose too many babies and mothers if we do not implement this policy change.” - **State Senator Teresa Fedor, Ohio**

“Pennsylvania has seen a disturbing increase in maternal mortality – the deaths of women during pregnancy or up to one year after birth—and the numbers are even worse for women of color. We know providing on-going health care is necessary, in order to support both mothers and their children. Extending Medicaid postpartum helps ensure that new moms can get the care that they need and deserve.” - **State Representative Dan Frankel, Pennsylvania**

“Providing a full year of health coverage to postpartum parents is the right thing to do. It’s good for families; it’s good for public health. That’s why we passed SB 5068 in Washington State — and why I’m calling on the federal government to permanently enact this important policy nationwide.” - **State Senator Emily Randall, Washington**
“As a person who just gave birth to my third child, I know how critical postpartum care is to recovering from birth and being able to care for your baby. This is basic healthcare that every birthing person needs and deserves, and it will give babies their healthiest start in life by caring for their parents.” - State Senator Kelda Roys, Wisconsin

See the full list of quotes for state legislators here.

This letter was organized in collaboration with Black Mamas Matter Alliance, the Center for Reproductive Rights, and SiX Action.

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