



Members of the Joint Committee on Finance:

The above named organizations, partners in the delivery and management of pregnancy, postpartum and newborn/infant care, urge you to **support extending Medicaid coverage for postpartum women for an additional 10-month period.**

Currently, in Wisconsin, pregnant women who are enrolled in the Medicaid program remain eligible for Medicaid coverage through the end of the month in which their 60-day postpartum period ends. Following the 60-day postpartum period a woman may remain enrolled in the program if she continues to meet all eligibility requirements, including income limits. If her household income exceeds 100% of the federal poverty level (\$17,420 for a family of two) she will be disenrolled from the program.

The postpartum period is a medically vulnerable period for all women. Complications during pregnancy, such as eclampsia, infection, or hemorrhage require intensive care, lengthy hospital stays, or hysterectomy; and pregnancy-related complications can surface up to a year after delivery. New mothers may also be dealing with postpartum depression or a host of other underlying medical conditions, all while caring for a newborn. The health and wellness of a mother has important implications for a baby's overall health including cognitive and social-emotional development. Continuous health care coverage is important in not only managing pregnancy related complications, but also to maintain access to mental health treatment, breastfeeding support, chronic disease management, and prescription drugs.

Disruptions in health care coverage can adversely affect access to medically necessary health care. According to an April 2017 Health Affairs report 55 percent of women covered by Medicaid or CHIP experienced some form of being uninsured during the postpartum period. The continuity and quality of postpartum care is particularly important for those who experience pregnancy related complications, have chronic conditions, such as hypertension or diabetes, are suffering from postpartum depression, or may be at-risk to experience relapse due to substance use disorder. Even women who may qualify for coverage in the private market - either through an employer sponsored plan or the federal marketplace – are likely to experience a change in providers or increased out of pocket costs, which can be barriers to accessing medically necessary health care during the postpartum period.

Despite a modern healthcare system, maternal morbidity and mortality in the United States is still a serious public health concern and has considerable short-and long-term individual, family, and societal impacts. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), around 700 pregnancy-related deaths occur in the U.S. each year, and most of these deaths are preventable. In Wisconsin, of pregnancy-related maternal deaths, more than 2 out of 3 occur postpartum, according to a review by the state Maternal Mortality Review Team. Leading causes of maternal death related to pregnancy include cardiac, infection, hemorrhage, blood clots, and embolic events.

Nationwide there are stark racial, ethnic and geographic disparities in maternal morbidity and mortality. Data from the CDC's Pregnancy Mortality Surveillance System shows that Black, American-Indian, and Alaska Native women are two to three times more likely to die from a pregnancy-related complication than non-Hispanic White women. In terms of geographic disparities, when controlled for sociodemographic factors and clinical conditions, a 2020 MACPAC Report to Congress found that women living in rural areas face greater maternal health risks than those residing in urban areas - having a 9 percent greater probability of severe maternal morbidity and mortality, compared with urban residents.

Disparities in Wisconsin are in many cases worse than national trends. According to the Department of Health Services, the rate of maternal morbidity in Wisconsin is higher than the national average and Black women in Wisconsin are 1.75 times more likely to experience maternal morbidity. The rate of maternal mortality is lower in Wisconsin than the national average, but the disparity between Black and white women is greater in Wisconsin than the nation at large. A Black woman in Wisconsin is 5 times more likely to die of maternal mortality than a white woman in Wisconsin.

The need for health care services does not end two months after childbirth. High rates of preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and wide racial, ethnic and geographic disparities have caught the attention of clinicians, public health practitioners, and policymakers from across the country. Medicaid plays an important role in maternal health and programs across the country are taking important steps to improve health outcomes. Extending Medicaid coverage during the postpartum period is emerging as a key strategy to address disparities in maternal morbidity and mortality. Since 2018 more than two dozen states – both red and blue – have proposed or approved legislation or Medicaid waivers to extend Medicaid coverage during the postpartum period.

Extending Medicaid coverage during the postpartum period for an additional 10-months will have a positive impact on the rates of maternal morbidity and mortality, begin to address racial, ethnic and geographic health disparities, and ultimately serve to benefit and strengthen families in Wisconsin. In a modern healthcare system, pregnancy-related deaths should never occur. We respectfully request your support of extending Medicaid coverage for postpartum women for an additional 10-month period.

***Respectfully submitted on behalf of following organizations:***

Advocate Aurora Health  
Alliance of Health Insurers  
American College of Nurse - Midwives  
American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists  
American Family Children's Hospital  
Ascension Wisconsin  
Children's Wisconsin  
Dean Health Plan  
Froedtert  
March of Dimes  
Marshfield Clinic Health System  
Marshfield Children's  
Medical College of Wisconsin  
Nurse – Family Partnership  
Society for Maternal Fetal – Medicine  
SSM Health  
UnityPoint Health  
UW School of Medicine and Public Health  
UW Health  
Wisconsin Academy of Family Physicians  
Wisconsin Association of Health Plans  
Wisconsin Association for Perinatal Care  
Wisconsin Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics  
Wisconsin Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians  
Wisconsin Hospital Association  
Wisconsin Medical Society