



new hampshire

WOMEN'S FOUNDATION

To: Chairman Pearson and the House Health, Human Services, and Elderly Affairs Committee
Re: Testimony in Support of House Bill 1536, (relative to expanding Medicaid to include certain postpartum health care services)
Date: January 31, 2022
Position: OUGHT TO PASS

The New Hampshire Women's Foundation invests in equality and opportunity for New Hampshire women and girls through research, education, advocacy and grantmaking.

We believe HB 1536 Ought to Pass because the year after birth is a crucial time for health care. Investment in this time period will save lives and dollars in uncompensated care. Most importantly, women deserve health care after a major health and life event.

Postpartum is a Crucial Time for Women to Have Access to Health Care

New Hampshire has long recognized the importance of providing preventive, acute care, and birth care for pregnant women. But women need access to care postpartum as well. There is an increasing rate of maternal mortality in the US with disparities by race and ethnicity.¹ Access to care would reduce maternal mortality.² Similarly, low-income and uninsured women are less likely to be treated for maternal depression.³ Providing Medicaid 12 months postpartum would save lives and have meaningful impact on this population as well as their families and communities.

Postpartum Care is a Wise Investment in Women's Health Care

Preventive care a lot less expensive than emergency care. Low-income women who qualified for Medicaid during pregnancy may work in low-wage jobs that do not offer health insurance and they are not able to afford marketplace insurance in addition to new expenses of caring for an infant. They are the same women who are likely to leave the workforce due to the high expense of child care. When women face an emergency situation postpartum, and are uninsured, this leads to uncompensated care at our community hospitals. Alternatively, if women are given access to preventive and supportive postpartum care, they are less likely to have emergent health needs in the first place. The whole health system sees the impact of investing in women's preventive care.⁴

¹ "Preventing Pregnancy-Related Deaths." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 20 Sept. 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternal-mortality/preventing-pregnancy-related-deaths.html>.

² Searing, Adam, et al. "Medicaid Expansion Fills Gaps in Maternal Health Coverage Leading to Healthier Mothers and Babies." *Center For Children and Families*, 17 June 2019, <https://bit.ly/2JPfa9N>.

³ Schmit, Stephanie, and Anitha Mohan. "Maternal Depression and Medicaid - Clasp." *Medicaid Changes Would Spell Trouble for Maternal Depression Screening, Treatment*, CLASP, Apr. 2017, <https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/public/resources-and-publications/publication-1/Maternal-Depression-and-Medicaid.pdf>.

⁴ Haley, Jennifer, and Emily Johnston. "Closing Gaps in Maternal Health Coverage: Assessing the Potential of a Postpartum Medicaid/CHIP Extension." *Closing Gaps in Maternal Health Coverage: Medicaid/CHIP Extension | Commonwealth Fund*, The Commonwealth Fund, 29 Jan. 2021, <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2021/jan/closing-gaps-maternal-health-postpartum-medicaid-chip>.

Women Deserve Health Care

It is true that children whose mothers have access to health care have better health and developmental outcomes themselves. However, we, in New Hampshire and nationally, should value women and provide care for those who cannot afford it after a major health event regardless of their connection to their children. If we only value women when it impacts children, we de-value women. Women are worthy of receiving the health care they need, period.

Conclusion

Providing 12-month postpartum coverage is a wise investment for New Hampshire and it provides care at a very crucial time for women and people who are postpartum. We urge you to support HB 1536.
