

August 25, 2021

Re: Extending Medicaid for Twelve Months Postpartum

Dear Conference Committee Members,

On behalf of the Think Babies™ NC Alliance, we write in strong support of including the Senate budget's provision to extend the Medicaid postpartum coverage period from 60 days to 12 months continuous coverage in the final Conference budget.

The postpartum period is one of the most essential in determining lifelong outcomes for both mothers and infants. Under North Carolina's current Medicaid for Pregnant Women benefit, low-income birthing parents are covered only 60 days after giving birth. This limits access to health care during one of the most pivotal periods in life.

Extending NC Medicaid coverage for a full 12 months postpartum can help prevent maternal and infant deaths by ensuring access to life-saving care and the services that help mom and baby thrive. The American Medical Association, the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecologists, and many other health care provider groups have endorsed states' extending Medicaid to 12 months postpartum in order to fight infant and maternal mortality in the US.

When children have good health in utero, good birth outcomes, and access to needed health services, they are more likely to have good physical health and on-track development during childhood and throughout life. North Carolina has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the nation. When new moms are healthy, they are better able to bond with and care for their infants. Extending postpartum Medicaid coverage promotes healthy development for babies and keeps both moms and babies healthy and safe.

The first year of life is a critical period in child development, setting the stage for lifelong learning and healthy relationships. Health coverage during this critical period of life provides care for common concerns such as maternal depression, supports healthy behaviors such as breastfeeding, and ensures preventive care and check-ups that support lifelong health and development.

Extending postpartum Medicaid coverage to 12 months can go a long way in safeguarding against infant and maternal mortality, promoting healthy development for babies, and supports women in need of care, allowing them to stay actively engaged in parenting. We urge you to support this life-saving legislation, and help ensure that all families across North Carolina start off on the right path.

For more information about Think Babies™ NC, please visit www.ThinkBabiesNC.org or contact Angela Burch-Octetree, Think Babies™ NC Project Manager, at info@thinkbabies.org.

Sincerely,
The Think Babies™ NC Alliance