



House Select Committee on Health Care Reform

HB 12: Relating to the duration of services provided under Medicaid to women following a pregnancy.

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Chair Harless and members of the House Select Committee on Health Care Reform:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input today on House Bill 12 by Representative Rose concerning Medicaid eligibility for women after pregnancy. Extending coverage to 12 months postpartum is a recommendation in Governor Greg Abbott's 2024-25 budget proposal, the 2022 Texas GOP Platform, and the Texas Maternal Mortality & Morbidity Review Committee's (TMMMRC) 2022 Biennial Report to the 88th Legislature. We respectfully offer the following points for the Committee's consideration to increase access to preventive and inter-contraception services for women and reduce maternal mortality:

- **Implement Texas' Maternal Mortality & Morbidity Review Committee Report's Recommendations:** One in four Texas women lack health insurance, and three in ten women are low-income. For pregnant women below 200% of the federal poverty level who lack insurance through their employer, or a spouse, Medicaid is often the only coverage option. When new mothers lose Medicaid coverage 60 days after giving birth, the TMMMRC found that they often lack the financial resources to be able to regain access to health care coverage. The Committee's 2022 report identified managing chronic diseases as the top patient-related contributing factor to maternal mortality and recommended extending health care coverage to 12 months postpartum to identify and properly manage health conditions before they become life-threatening and costly to treat.
- **Address the Service Gap for New Mothers:** The TMMMRC report found that the vast majority (about 90 percent) of maternal deaths are preventable, with a third of preventable maternal deaths occurring between 43 days and one year after giving birth; meaning new mothers who develop a chronic or acute health condition after their pregnancy are not receiving the care they need. In 2020, the Healthy Texas Women (HTW) Plus program was created to provide limited postpartum coverage beyond Medicaid coverage for certain eligible women. However, the state program only provides basic services, leaving out benefits such as covered prescriptions, physical therapy, or inpatient/outpatient hospitalizations. Access to comprehensive services after pregnancy facilitates continuity of care, enables effective care transitions, promotes safe birth spacing, and improves the lifelong health of women.
- **Increase Mental Health Care Access for Postpartum Women:** Comprehensive behavioral and mental health care is essential for early detection, intervention, and prevention of adverse outcomes associated with postpartum depression and substance use disorders, such as suicide. The TMMMRC findings also revealed that mental

disorders most frequently appeared after two months postpartum. Accessing mental health services through the new HTW Plus program remains challenging due to a limited network of specialty or mental health providers. Extending coverage would improve access to mental health care providers in the existing Medicaid provider network, offering crucial support for mothers struggling with their mental health.

- **Combat Health Disparities in Maternal and Infant Care:** An estimated one in ten Texans are born to mothers who received late or no prenatal care, often resulting in premature or low birthweight infants requiring additional medical services in the first year of life. Making matters worse, populations of color disproportionately have poorer health outcomes. For example, Black infants are twice as likely as White infants to be preterm, or low birth weight babies. Providing comprehensive services for all eligible mothers would minimize racial and ethnic disparities and address the alarming rates of adverse health outcomes in children.

RECOMMENDATION:

Texas should join other states, including Alabama, South Carolina, Florida, Louisiana, Kentucky, Ohio, West Virginia, Tennessee, and others, by extending coverage to new mothers. Extending coverage to 12 months postpartum would improve maternal morbidity and mortality rates by enabling women to maintain continuous healthcare coverage and receive treatment services early on for chronic conditions such as substance use, diabetes, and hypertension.

The passage of HB 12 would improve the health of both mothers and infants, promote physical and mental health well-being, and ensure continuity of care so that families can thrive.

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