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October 5, 2021

Dear Pennsylvania Congressional Member,

As members of the Thriving PA Perinatal Health Advocacy Campaign, we urge the Pennsylvania Congressional Delegation to prioritize perinatal health equity and support the Build Back Better Act. Thriving PA is a non-partisan, statewide campaign that seeks to improve the quality of and increase equitable access to a coordinated system of health supports. The Build Back Better Act includes several key provisions for combating maternal mortality and morbidity including requiring all states to extend full-benefit Medicaid postpartum coverage to one year after the end of pregnancy. Expanding Medicaid to at least one-year postpartum would ensure that all women have access to the care they need to be as healthy as possible after having a baby.

Now more than ever Pennsylvania's moms and birthing people need access to comprehensive perinatal health services. A recent [report](#) published by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services highlights an alarming trend: maternal mortality is on the rise. Pregnancy Associated Death increased by 21% over a five-year period (2013-2018) and 58% of deaths occurred 43 to 365 days postpartum¹. With over one-third of Pennsylvania's births paid for by Medicaid, expanding and enhancing access to high-quality care up to one year after birth is a key strategy for mitigating maternal mortality and morbidity¹. Additionally, 1 in 7 women experience perinatal depression thus making it the #1 complication of pregnancy¹. More broadly, mental health conditions (e.g., depression, anxiety, affective disorders with psychotic episodes and psychosis, and substance use disorder) are a leading cause of pregnancy-related death¹. Coverage throughout the full 12-month postpartum period will support mothers in accessing critical care such as maternal mental health supports.

Ensuring all mothers have equitable access to comprehensive and continuous health coverage throughout their pregnancies and the postpartum period is a necessary step in addressing the maternal health crisis in America. As Congress continues to negotiate the Build Back Better Act, we urge you to prioritize the mandatory permanent extension of postpartum Medicaid. We appreciate your consideration of our recommendation. To discuss the above recommendations further, please contact Sara Jann, Director of Policy & Advocacy, Maternity Care Coalition at sjann@maternitycarecoalition.org.

Sincerely,

Sara Jann, Co-Chair on behalf of the Thriving PA Perinatal Health Advocacy Campaign

¹ <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/Diseases%20and%20Conditions/Pregnancy%20Associated%20Deaths%202013-2018%20FINAL.pdf>

¹ CDC. (2019, May 14). Pregnancy-related Deaths | VitalSigns. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/maternal-deaths/index.html>

¹ <https://www.acog.org/-/media/project/acog/acogorg/clinical/files/committee-opinion/articles/2018/11/screening-for-perinatal-depression.pdf>

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternal-mortality/erase-mm/mmr-data-brief.html>