



July 19, 2022

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Schumer:

On behalf of March of Dimes, the nation's leading nonprofit organization fighting for the health of all moms and babies, I write to request that you protect maternal health provisions under any final budget reconciliation package. During this critical time of enduring COVID-19, the health of our nation's mothers, infants and families must be a priority. Even before the pandemic, our nation was confronted with a maternal health crisis. As Congress finalizes the upcoming budget legislation, March of Dimes urges you to address the deep inequities that individuals giving birth face, specifically Black, Hispanic and Indigenous women.

An estimated 700 women die from complications related to pregnancy each year and more than 50,000 other women experience life-threatening complications due to labor and delivery. Additionally, one in five women are affected by anxiety, depression, and other maternal mental health conditions during the postpartum period. It is well documented that the threat of maternal mortality and morbidity is especially acute for women of color.

We urge you to maintain the inclusion of the provision for a permanent extension of full benefits for eligible pregnant and postpartum women for up to one year under Medicaid. In addition, this language also provides 12 months of postpartum coverage to women enrolled in the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Currently, Medicaid covers almost half of all births in the U.S., however, states are required to provide just 60 days of postpartum coverage. While we are pleased that the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) had a temporary state plan option to extend postpartum coverage to one year after the end of pregnancy, and several states have chosen to take advantage of this option, we must make 12 months postpartum coverage mandatory and permanent.

We also ask that you protect Omnibus provisions included in the reconciliation package. President Biden and Vice President Harris have shown a clear commitment to invest federal resources in maternal health.¹ The investment in the Black Maternal Health Omnibus Act of 2021 (H.R. 959/S. 346) represents the first significant step in improving maternal health, specifically for Black, Hispanic and Indigenous people. The Omnibus, comprised of 12 bills, strengthens our health care systems by

¹ "Blueprint for Addressing the Maternal Health Crisis" <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Maternal-Health-Blueprint.pdf>



investing in community-based partners that center the needs, preferences, and voices of Black birthing people.

We would also like to again express our strong support for advancing provisions that would:

- Close the Medicaid coverage gap on a permanent basis guaranteeing people in all states have access to affordable coverage. Without action, more than 2 million people with incomes below the poverty line, who were supposed to gain coverage under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), will continue to lack access to affordable health coverage;
- Permanently extend the expanded health insurance tax credits for ACA coverage. Families across America would face a 53% increase in health insurance costs if the subsidies under ARPA are not extended beyond this year;
- Secure coverage for children by providing for 12 months continuous coverage eligibility under Medicaid and CHIP;
- Make CHIP permanent removing the potential for lapses in authorization that threaten the program's stability and children's continued access to coverage; and
- Extend the expanded Child Tax Credit that was provided under the ARPA.

March of Dimes appreciates your continued strong leadership as you work to finalize the budget agreement. We look forward to working with you to ensure that pregnant women, new mothers and infants are prioritized as Congress focuses on addressing our nation's most pressing health care challenges. Please direct any follow-up questions to KJ Hertz, Senior Director, Federal Affairs (khertz@marchofdimes.org, 571.969.8655).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Stacey Y. Brayboy'.

Stacey Y. Brayboy
Sr. Vice President, Public Policy & Government Affairs