



October 13, 2021

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

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

Dear Speaker Pelosi and 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 in ongoing discussions on budget reconciliation. 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 happy that the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) had a state plan option to extend postpartum coverage to one year after the end of pregnancy, only some states have passed legislation or taken steps to take advantage of this option, and not all would extend coverage for the 12-month period.

In addition, we ask that you protect Momnibus provisions included in the reconciliation discussions. President Biden has shown a clear commitment to invest federal resources in maternal health, paving the way for key policies included in the Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act of 2021 (H.R. 959/S. 346) to be included in the Build Back Better Act. We applaud this significant first step in improving maternal health, specifically for Black, Hispanic and Indigenous people. The Momnibus, comprised of 12 bills, strengthens our health care systems by investing in community-based partners that center the needs, preferences, and voices of Black birthing people.

We would also like to reiterate our strong support for advancing provisions in the budget reconciliation process that would:

- Close the Medicaid coverage gap on a permanent basis guaranteeing people in all states have access to affordable coverage;
- Permanently extend the expanded health insurance tax credits for ACA coverage;



- 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;
- Establish a universal, comprehensive, permanent national paid family and medical leave program to provide workers with up to 12 weeks of partial income; 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, appearing to read 'Stacey D. Stewart'.

Stacey D. Stewart
President & CEO

Cc:
The Honorable Patty Murray
The Honorable Ron Wyden
The Honorable Frank Pallone
The Honorable Richard Neal
The Honorable Bobby Scott