



PRESS RELEASE

Media Contact: Alison Yager, J.D. Florida Health Justice Project Executive Director;
yager@floridahealthjustice.org; 646-322-8111

71 Organizations and 206 Individuals Call on Florida Legislators to Address Maternal Health Crisis By Extending Medicaid Coverage to 12 Months Postpartum

Florida Ranks 49th in Nation for Access to Healthcare for Women

(Miami, Florida)—April 17, 2021 – Over seventy organizations, including healthcare entities and women’s and children’s advocacy and rights organizations, along with over 200 concerned individuals throughout the state have signed on to a [Letter of Support](#) urging the Florida legislature to [extend Medicaid](#)’s postpartum coverage from 60 days to a full year.

Florida Health Justice Project, a non-partisan, non-profit healthcare advocacy organization, is leading the statewide coalition of advocates seeking this change, which would address health access issues and inequities that are putting the lives of women and infants at risk.

"Florida essentially abandons new mothers whose pregnancies are covered by Medicaid, with coverage running out just 60 days after birth," said Alison Yager, Executive Director of Florida Health Justice Project; "Mothers without healthcare are less likely to seek treatment for chronic conditions, including diabetes, high blood pressure, substance use disorder and of course, postpartum depression. As a result, their children also suffer."

Under a proposal pending in the Florida legislature, Medicaid’s pregnancy coverage would be extended through the first year postpartum, allowing for timely interventions that would avoid more expensive care later. [Other states](#) have taken up this issue, and it has received widespread support at the federal level.

“This Black Maternal Health Week (April 11 -17), while we celebrate Black mothers and their families, and the proud history of Black midwives in this country, let us also recommit to doing all we can to remediate the stark disparities in maternal health outcomes,” Yager said.

Extending postpartum care is a key strategy in addressing these racial disparities: In 2018, non-Hispanic Black women in Florida experienced pregnancy related mortality at a rate of 2.5 times that of non-Hispanic White women.

Further, children’s healthy development depends on healthy parents. When parents have health coverage, their children are more likely to receive check-ups and preventive care. And treating [maternal depression](#), a condition that does not end when coverage ends, 60 days postpartum, has [positive impacts](#) on the cognitive and social-emotional development of children that carry through childhood.

Medicaid finances [nearly half](#) of all births in Florida. Currently, a single pregnant woman who earns up to \$33,792 annually is eligible for the program. However, beyond the 60th day postpartum, coverage is limited to those who are extremely low-income, earning no more than \$5,508 annually. Partly because of these restrictive guidelines, [17%](#) of females, ages 19-64 in Florida women are uninsured. The March of Dimes gave Florida a D+ in its 2020 Report Card for maternal and infant health indicators.

“The Florida House has taken a historic first step toward committing to this extension of coverage for moms,” Yager said. “We urge the Senate to follow the House Speaker’s lead, in the name of healthy moms and babies.”

Also important to understand, Florida is one of 12 states that has yet to expand Medicaid, a move that would provide coverage to 1.1 million Floridians, and bring in billions of federal dollars under the [American Rescue Plan](#). Pending bills before the Florida legislature to expand Medicaid have yet to be heard, although a statewide [campaign](#) is underway to educate Florida officials on the measure.

“Mothers and babies can’t wait. And neither can millions of Florida residents who are suffering and dying waiting for life-saving healthcare,” Yager said. “Now is the time to address the healthcare crisis facing our state.”

Florida Health Justice Project (FHJP) recognizes that access to quality and affordable health care is a human right and engages in comprehensive advocacy to expand healthcare access and promote health equity for the most vulnerable. www.floridahealthjustice.org

[###](#)