



## **Florida Health Justice Project Urges Florida Governor Ron DeSantis to Support Extending Medicaid Coverage 12 Months for New Mothers**

### ***One Step Further Toward Improving Healthcare for Women***

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(Miami, Florida)—May 20, 2021 – The Florida legislature did the right thing by passing a budget that provides funding to extend Medicaid for postpartum women from 60 days to a full year after giving birth.

The Florida budget sent to Governor DeSantis provides \$239.8 million to extend postpartum coverage to 12 months or 365 days under Florida’s Medicaid program. Governor DeSantis should announce his support for this life-saving measure that is critical to improving the health of women and their babies.

“When mothers suffer, so do their children,” said Alison Yager, Executive Director of **Florida Health Justice Project**. “We can and must do better. The legislature has recognized as such with their commitment to extend Medicaid’s postpartum coverage. We look forward to the Governor signing this into law.”

Florida Health Justice Project, a non-partisan, non-profit healthcare advocacy organization, led the statewide coalition seeking to extend Medicaid for postpartum women as part of a campaign to improve health access and rectify long-standing inequities.

Florida ranks 49th in the nation for women’s access to health care. The March of Dimes gave Florida a D+ in its 2020 Report Card for maternal and infant health indicators.

“Healthier mothers equal healthier babies. Extending Medicaid for new mothers is the single, most important change that Florida can implement to have the greatest impact on maternal deaths and birth outcomes,” said Cathy Timuta, CEO, **Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions**. “By providing continued access to medical care and treatment services, mothers with chronic health issues can continue to get the healthcare they need.”

By extending Medicaid, new mothers will have access to affordable health care to treat chronic conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, substance use disorders and depression. When parents have health coverage, their children are more likely to receive check-ups and preventive care. For example, treating maternal depression, which does not end when coverage currently ends, at just 60 days postpartum, has positive impacts on the cognitive and social-emotional development of children that carry through childhood.

"Medicaid recipients fall into postpartum depression because we don't have the resources for care after we have babies" said Lanieyah Setticase, a Birth Justice Doula with **Southern Birth Justice Network**. "I tried to get a therapist once. It was too expensive, and Medicaid would only cover it if I was a domestic violence victim."

Improving the mental health of children has been a priority of the first lady of Florida, Casey DeSantis. Extending Medicaid dovetails with her work by allowing moms to get the mental healthcare they need in the postpartum year so that their babies can thrive.

"Many Floridians go without needed healthcare to make ends meet financially; new mothers put their own needs behind those of their children," said Beth Berglin, Director of Public Policy for the **United Way of Miami-Dade**. "This critical extension of health coverage will allow them to keep their health a priority while they continue to care for their newborns."

The Florida Health Justice Project eagerly awaits the Governor's signature on the extension of postpartum Medicaid coverage, ensuring critical coverage as an investment in thriving families.

*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, including expanding Medicaid, a move that would provide coverage to 1.1 million Floridians, and bring in billions of federal dollars under the American Rescue Plan. [www.floridahealthjustice.org](http://www.floridahealthjustice.org)*

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