



Illinois Delegation Endorses Postpartum Care Expansion for New Moms

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – On Friday, Members of the Illinois delegation wrote to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services endorsing the state’s waiver request to expand care access to new moms for the entire postpartum period.

In endorsing the waiver request, they wrote: “Illinois’ waiver request demonstrates innovative solutions to the maternal mortality crisis and embodies the intent of Congress in creating the Medicaid program to provide medical assistance to our nation’s most vulnerable populations.”

In Illinois, maternal deaths have reached crisis levels. [According to the Illinois Department of Health’s Maternal Morbidity and Mortality Report](#), 93 new Illinois moms lost their lives in 2015. On average, the state lost 73 new moms from 2008-2016 each year and 72 percent of these deaths were deemed to be preventable.

Expanding Medicaid coverage to the entire postpartum period is a proven strategy to reduce maternal deaths.

At present, Medicaid, which covers 44 percent of births in Illinois, expires for new moms just 60 days after giving birth, well short of the one-year coverage

recommendation from medical experts. Evidence shows that 70 percent of new moms will have at least one complication within a year of giving birth.

“New moms should be able to see their doctor. Expanding the Medicaid coverage window to the entire postpartum period is a simple but proven and critical step to reduce maternal deaths,” said Congresswoman Robin Kelly, chair of the Congressional Black Caucus Health Braintrust and co-chair of the Congressional Caucus of Black Women and Girls. “Ensuring new moms can see their doctor helps keep moms, babies and families happy, healthy and thriving. Let’s do this and save lives.”

“No country as wealthy as the United States should have this many new mothers and babies, especially women and babies of color, dying from preventable health complications,” said Senator Dick Durbin. “Medicaid covers more than 40 percent of births in Illinois, but cuts off health coverage for new moms after only two months post-delivery. Illinois’ plan to extend Medicaid coverage for new moms up to one year postpartum would improve and save the lives of new moms and their babies, and it would help reduce racial disparities surrounding maternal and infant mortality rates.”

“It is a national embarrassment that the United States is the only industrialized nation with rising maternal mortality. Tragically, black women are three to four times more likely to die from a pregnancy-related complication when compared to white women,” Rep. Bobby Rush said. “Moreover, Illinois women on Medicaid are among the most vulnerable when it comes to pregnancy-related deaths. That is why it is absolutely necessary that CMS act swiftly and approve Illinois’ waiver to extend postpartum Medicaid coverage. We must do more to protect our mothers, particularly black women and women on Medicaid, who are the most at risk of disastrous health outcomes and even death. I am pleased to join my colleagues in supporting Illinois’ waiver to do just that.”

“I’m proud to join my colleagues in urging CMS to approve our state’s bold step to extend Medicaid coverage to 12 months postpartum. This extension will make strides in our effort to combat the U.S. maternal mortality crisis and the unacceptable racial disparities we witness in maternal deaths,” said Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky. “Comprehensive maternal health care is critical to the well-being of new mothers and newborns — especially during the ‘fourth trimester’ after childbirth. New mothers shouldn’t have to worry that their financial situation will keep them from getting the health care they deserve.”

“Extending Medicaid coverage to 12 months postpartum is vital for protecting the health of women in Illinois,” said Rep. Dan Lipinski. “With the maternal mortality rate on the rise in the United States, we must take drastic action to take care of our most vulnerable. I’m proud to join my colleagues in urging immediate action on this request.”

“No mother should have to lose her life – no child should have to lose their parent – because of a pregnancy complication that we could have prevented,” said Congresswoman Bustos. “Expanding Medicaid coverage is an important next step toward addressing this issue critical to our community and ensuring new mothers have access to the care they need. This problem lies right here in our own backyard and only by working together will we be able to make significant strides in improving maternal health.”

Members of the delegation have proposed a number of other legislative solutions to reduce maternal mortality:

- Congresswoman Robin Kelly and Senator Dick Durbin have introduced the Mothers and Offspring Mortality and Morbidity Awareness (MOMMA’s) Act (H. R. 1897/S. 916), which offers a comprehensive, multipronged approach to maternal mortality prevention.
- Congresswoman Robin Kelly introduced the bipartisan Helping MOMS Act (H.R. 4996), which was unanimously reported out of the House Energy and Commerce Committee.
- Congresswoman Cheri Bustos introduced the Social Determinants Accelerator Act (H.R. 4004), to provide up to \$25 million in grants to local communities to fight social factors that lead to negative health outcomes, including high maternal mortality rates.

The letter to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services was signed by Senators Dick Durbin and Tammy Duckworth and Representatives Bobby Rush (IL-01), Robin Kelly (IL-02), Daniel Lipinski (IL-03), Jesús G. “Chuy” García (IL-04), Sean Casten (IL-06), Danny Davis (IL-07), Raja Krishnamoorthi (IL-08), Jan Schakowsky (IL-09), Brad Schneider (IL-10), Bill Foster (IL-11), Lauren Underwood (IL-14) and Cheri Bustos (IL-17).