



Durbin Champions Illinois' Recently Signed Waiver To Extend Health Care Coverage For New Moms

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WASHINGTON – During Black Maternal Health Week, U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), in a speech on the Senate floor, today applauded the Biden Administration for approving and signing Illinois' 1115 waiver, which will extend health care coverage for new moms on Medicaid in Illinois from 60 days after pregnancy to a full year. In February 2020, Durbin and U.S. Representative Robin Kelly (D-IL-02) led 14 members of the Illinois Congressional Delegation in sending a [letter](#) to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), requesting approval for Illinois' effort to expand Medicaid coverage for new moms. With yesterday's signing, Illinois becomes the first state to expand this Medicaid coverage.

For the past two congresses, Durbin and Kelly have introduced the bicameral [Mothers and Offspring Mortality and Morbidity Awareness \(MOMMA's\) Act](#), which seeks to improve maternal and infant health outcomes, especially for women and babies of color. One of the main provisions of this legislation is ensuring that new moms can remain on Medicaid health coverage for a full year after their pregnancy, versus just 60 days. Further, thanks to Durbin, Kelly, Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), and Representative Lauren Underwood's (D-IL-14) leadership, the American Rescue Plan [included](#) a provision to give states a five-year option to extend health care coverage for new moms on Medicaid from 60 days after pregnancy to a full year. In the midst of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, this provision will help improve and save the lives of new mothers—especially women of color who are at increased risk of serious complications, or even death, because of their pregnancy.

“Making sure new moms have health coverage for a full year post-pregnancy will go a long way toward catching, preventing, and treating potentially life-threatening conditions and problems... This will ensure access to vital health services and help to promote better birth outcomes and reduce the rate of maternal sickness and death in my

home state, and I hope set the stage and model for other states to follow,” Durbin said. “I can think of no better way to honor this year’s Black Maternal Health Week than to support state efforts to expand Medicaid health care to new moms... I’m pleased that my state of Illinois will be part of leading in that effort.”

Video of Durbin’s remarks on the Senate floor is available [here](#).

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Footage of Durbin’s remarks on the Senate floor is available [here](#) for TV Stations.

The United States is one of only 13 countries in the world where the maternal mortality rate is worse now than it was 25 years ago and is the only industrialized country with a rising maternal mortality rate. These shocking statistics cut across geography, education level, income, and socio-economic status. On average, maternal mortality claims the lives of about 700 American moms each year—an additional 70,000 women suffer near-fatal health complications—with more than 60 percent of these deaths being preventable. Women of color are particularly at risk—nationwide, Black women are more than three times as likely than white women to suffer pregnancy-related deaths.

Maternal and infant mortality is especially important to Illinois families. According to the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), on average, 73 new Illinois mothers die every year, with more than 70 percent of these deaths deemed preventable. While Illinois’ maternal mortality rate is slightly lower than the national average, the disparity of Black mothers dying is nearly double the national disparity. According to the IDPH, Black mothers in Illinois die at 600 percent the rate of their white counterparts.

The importance of passing this provision has become even more vital given that the ongoing global health pandemic has both disproportionately impacted our communities of color, and left many pregnant and postpartum women searching for answers about how best to protect themselves and their children.