

# SUPPORTING PARENTS AND NEWBORNS FOR A HEALTHIER NEW MEXICO

Nothing changes your life like a brand-new baby, but one thing a new birth shouldn't change is whether or not you can get health insurance.

## The Problem

New mothers in New Mexico are currently only eligible for **just 2 months** of postpartum Medicaid coverage. This, unfortunately, forces parents to find new health insurance **only 60 days** after giving birth, while caring for their newborns and managing their own postpartum health concerns.<sup>1</sup> Changing health insurance often results in gaps in coverage and delays in care that can lead to an increased use of emergency services and worse overall health outcomes.<sup>2</sup>



### Losing postpartum Medicaid coverage is dangerous for parents and babies – especially in communities of color:

- The rates of maternal and infant mortality are **highest for people of color**.
- Infants born to mothers of color have higher mortality rates due, in part, to a lack of access to health care.<sup>3</sup>
- Black and Hispanic births are disproportionately covered through Medicaid, and Black and Hispanic mothers are **almost twice as likely** to be uninsured postpartum than are white mothers.<sup>4</sup> Changing Medicaid to include 12 months of postpartum care could help advance health equity.

### Without postpartum coverage, new parents can miss out on mental health care that supports healthy infant development.

- Perinatal depression affects **up to 1 in 4 pregnant people**, and estimates show that more than half of infants living in poverty are being raised by mothers suffering from some form of depression.<sup>5</sup>
- Untreated maternal postpartum depression is associated with **child abuse and developmental delays** in children.<sup>6</sup>



## BY THE NUMBERS

- New Mexico's maternal mortality rate of **28 deaths per 100,000** live births is higher than the national average of 20 deaths.<sup>7</sup>
- Nationally, **one-third** of maternal deaths occur within the first year postpartum.<sup>8</sup>
- **60%** of maternal deaths are preventable.<sup>9</sup>
- In New Mexico, the maternal mortality rate is **four times higher** for Black mothers than the state average for all races.<sup>10</sup>
- Of all maternal deaths in New Mexico, **20%** are of Native American mothers even though Native Americans compose **11%** of the state population.<sup>11</sup>
- **71%** of births in New Mexico are covered by Medicaid - the highest percentage in the country.<sup>12</sup> Because of this high coverage, extending postpartum Medicaid would have a large impact on the health of New Mexico mothers and infants.

## THE SOLUTION

New Mexico lawmakers can prevent maternal deaths by extending Medicaid's postpartum coverage to a full year after birth. Extended coverage will allow mothers and newborns to get the services they need to stay healthy and thrive.

- Through the **American Rescue Plan Act**, states have the option of extending Medicaid postpartum coverage to 1 year. The Act gives states federal matching funds to offer the additional 10 months of full-benefit Medicaid coverage.<sup>13</sup>
- **26 states are taking action** to extend postpartum coverage, including Florida and Colorado, which have already appropriated state matching funds to implement an extension of postpartum Medicaid when it comes available April 1, 2022.<sup>14</sup>
- Expanding health care access for parents improves the health and other long-term outcomes for children.<sup>15</sup>
- By extending postpartum Medicaid, lawmakers will ensure that mothers and infants of color will be able to access the care they need, **reduce racial disparities** for maternal and infant health outcomes, and **create a more equitable health care coverage system** for all New Mexico families.<sup>16</sup>

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