

Recommendations to Promote Maternal Health through the State Budget

Testimony to the Senate Finance Committee on Finance on Article II of Senate Bill 1

Texas leaders have stated that women's and maternal health will be a priority during the 2023 legislative session. Senate Bill 1 is a great foundation for achieving that priority. We are grateful that Senate Bill 1 invests in preconception and postpartum family planning services and increases funding for the state's Family Planning Program (FPP). Yet, additional funding is needed for FPP to promote program growth. We urge lawmakers to adopt the funding needed to implement 12 months of postpartum health coverage, which numerous legislators have stated is a top priority.

Further Increase Funding for Family Planning Program to Promote Program Growth

Continued investment in Texas' women's health programs is critical for rebuilding our state's family planning network and providing vital services such as health screenings, contraception, and well-woman exams to Texas women. Family Planning Program (FPP) is a vital preventive health program for Texans who do not qualify for health coverage options. FPP providers can determine client eligibility onsite and get people in the door for same day services. This flexibility and responsiveness is a key asset to FPP. **Participating FPP providers throughout the state report that FPP is consistently in high demand and program funds routinely run out before the end of the funding cycle.**¹

We appreciate that Senate Bill 1 significantly increases FPP funding, which is a great start to better support and meet the demand for affordable preventive healthcare for Texas communities. Healthy Texas Women (HTW) and FPP served approximately 300,000 clients in 2021 – and with the end of the continuous coverage requirement in Medicaid on March 31, 2023, the number of clients entering HTW and FPP are expected to significantly increase. Approximately 400,000 women are expected to lose Medicaid for Pregnant Women coverage in the summer of 2023, most of whom will be eligible for HTW or FPP. Based on current utilization and expected caseload increases, additional funding is needed for FPP in particular to allow clinics to ramp up services and recruit new FPP contractors in contraceptive deserts, which are regions of the state where access to preventive care is geographically limited.

Recommendation:

- **Further increase funding for FPP to promote program growth through grant funding to support new contractors in rural areas.**

Fund 12 Months Postpartum Healthcare for Texas Moms

Texas should move forward with extending Medicaid coverage to 12 months postpartum, an option available to states through a simple Medicaid State Plan Amendment (SPA). A full year of coverage after pregnancy ensures new mothers have access to comprehensive health coverage and medical care. One in four Texas women of childbearing age do not have health insurance (26 percent),² which Texas' own data show contributes to maternal deaths and severe complications for postpartum women. For women who do not get health insurance through their job or their spouse, many times the only coverage option is Medicaid, which is available to low-income women while they are pregnant.

The Texas Maternal Mortality & Morbidity Review Committee found that 27 percent of maternal deaths in Texas occur between 43 days and one year after pregnancy. And the vast majority (about 90 percent) of maternal deaths are preventable.³ The burden of maternal mortality weighs heaviest on Black women, who are more than twice as likely to die of pregnancy-related causes than the average for all women, regardless of education level or other socioeconomic factors.⁴ A full year of coverage after pregnancy would prevent maternal morbidities and mortalities by allowing more Texas mothers to see a medical or mental health professional to manage medical issues and complications before they get worse — such as postpartum depression, cardiac arrest, infection, and extreme blood loss or hemorrhage.



12 WOMEN DIED PER MONTH ON AVERAGE WHILE PREGNANT OR WITHIN ONE YEAR OF PREGNANCY.

In 2020, Black women were 2x more likely to experience critical health issues –

1.7x more likely to have hemorrhage-related health issues.

3.2x more likely to have preeclampsia-related health issues.

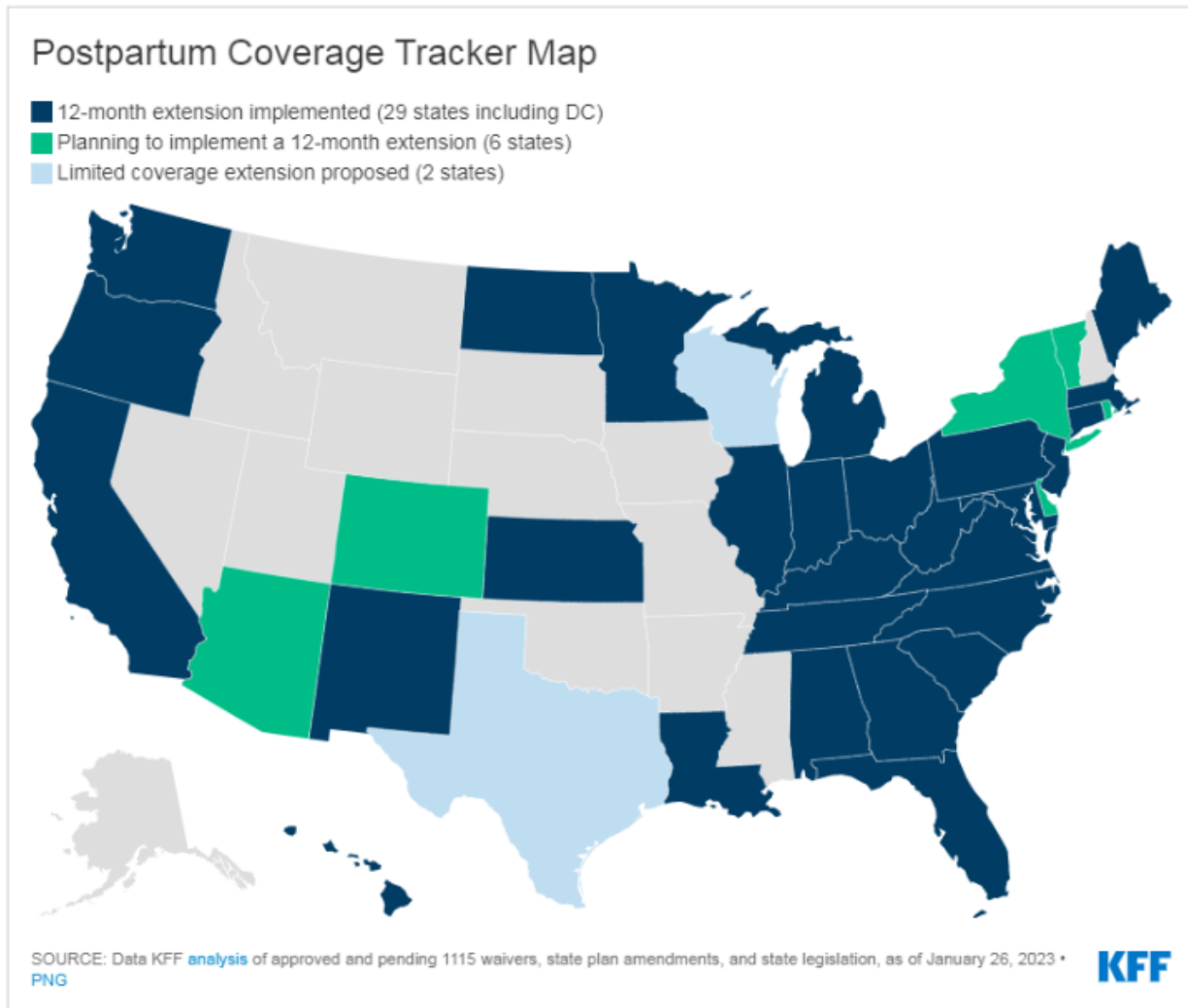
2.3x more likely to have sepsis-related health issues.

Source: Department of State Health Services. Letter from DSHS Commissioner Jennifer Shuford to Governor Greg Abbott (December 2022). Available https://www.dshs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/legislative/2022-Reports/Letter-to-Governor-Abbott_Infographic-Attachments.pdf.

Texas has taken a significant step by passing HB 133 (87th Regular Session), which would allow new mothers to keep Medicaid for six months postpartum rather than just two months. However, this law has not been implemented and the state landscape on postpartum coverage has changed enormously in the last two years. **The vast majority of states (35 states) have extended postpartum coverage for a full year after pregnancy, including Alabama, South Carolina, Florida, Louisiana, Kentucky, Ohio, West Virginia, and Tennessee, among others.**⁵

Recommendation:

- **The state budget should include funding needed to extend Medicaid for 12 months postpartum.** HHSC has testified that the estimated cost for 12 months postpartum coverage will be \$90 million in General Revenue Funds for FY 2024 and \$110 in General Revenue Funds for FY 2025.



Endnotes

1. Nehme E, Patel D, Cortez D, Gulbas L, Lakey D. (2020) Increasing Access to Healthcare Coverage for Uninsured, Postpartum Women in Texas: A Report from the Postpartum Access to Healthcare (PATH) Project. Austin, TX: The University of Texas System/Texas Collaborative for Healthy Mothers and Babies.
2. Georgetown University Center for Children and Families. Medicaid Expansion Narrows Maternal Health Coverage Gaps, But Racial Disparities Persist (Sept. 2021).
3. Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Task Force and Department of State Health Services Joint Biennial Report. (2022). Available at <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/legislative/2022-Reports/Joint-Biennial-MMMRC-Report-2022.pdf> .
4. Ibid.
5. Kaiser Family Foundation. [Medicaid Postpartum Coverage Extension Tracker](#).