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Committees:
Public Policy, RMM
Utilities, RMM
Health and Provider Services
Commerce and Technology
Agriculture
Natural Resources

April 5, 2021

Eric Holcomb, Governor of Indiana
Office of the Governor
200 West Washington Street
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Governor Holcomb:

I write to you today to urge you to take an action recommended by the Indiana Department of Health and extend Medicaid coverage for new mothers from 60 days to one year. Under Section 9812 of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, the State of Indiana now has the option to keep new mothers on their health care plans for a full year. This new power available to you under the Act can save lives, especially in the communities I serve, and I urge you to take this opportunity.

Hoosiers who give birth without being covered for vital postpartum care do not have access to basic services for birth recovery, chronic disease management, infant care and feeding or management for their mood and emotional well-being. Unfortunately, low-income moms must simply pray that their own health doesn't deteriorate as a result of childbirth. We can do better than that.

Race is a social determinant in the overlap between high rates of maternal mortality and the egregious rates of infant mortality. According to the CDC, Black and non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaska Native women experienced higher rates of pregnancy-related deaths than all other racial/ethnic groups. Indiana Department of Health data has long shown that Black infant mortality rates exceed those of any other ethnic group. Data on infant mortality rates in Marion County shows that Black [infant mortality](#) numbers consistently surpass those of the white-majority.

In Indiana, [86% of pregnancy-associated deaths occurred postpartum, including 37% after 6 weeks](#). That rate is stomach-churning when you consider that the Maternal Mortality Review Committee said in December that [87%](#) of those deaths could have been prevented. Real or perceived barriers to communication between providers often prevent medical professionals from coordinating appropriately. Lack of access to coverage can lead to women being inadequately screened for and engaged in substance use programs. In some case, emergency departments or primary care physicians failed to recognize hypertension in postpartum women.

In response to the study, your administration's Maternal Mortality Review Committee cited the following as a 'key recommendation for the State of Indiana': Extend postpartum coverage for Medicaid clients, and include parity to ensure appropriate access to care for chronic conditions, including substance use and mental health disorders.

We have now been given this chance to meet that recommendation and save the lives of a significant number of new mothers. Lacking resources should never prevent someone or their child from receiving necessary medical treatment.

I urge you, Governor Holcomb, to expand on your [commitment to decrease Indiana's infant mortality](#) rate by extending Medicaid coverage for new mothers. I, and many others, would applaud this move.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JB", with a large loop at the end.

Jean Breaux
Indiana State Senator
Senate District 34