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Legislative District 43  
Baltimore City

Education, Health, and  
Environmental Affairs Committee

*Chair*  
Joint Committee on Ending  
Homelessness

*Chair*  
Joint Committee on Children,  
Youth, and Families



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
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**SUPPORT – SB 923**

**Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Eligibility**

Health and Government Operations Committee  
Senator Mary Washington Testimony March 30, 2021

Chair Pendergrass, Vice-Chair Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Committee,

I respectfully urge you to vote favorably on SB 923, the Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Eligibility, which would require the Maryland Medical Assistance to provide comprehensive medical and other health care services for a pregnant program recipient for the duration of the pregnancy and for 1 year immediately following the end of the woman's pregnancy.

In August 2020, the President of the Senate appointed a Senate workgroup to address environmental justice, health care disparities, and wealth and economic opportunity for minority Marylanders. The workgroup issued a report in January 2021, which includes a recommendation to extend Medicaid coverage for pregnant women until 12 months postpartum. This bill would do just that.

**AMENDMENTS ADOPTED IN THE SENATE:**

- Amendment 1 strikes the provisions in the bill relating to the development of written materials regarding disenrollment from Medicaid. We felt that this would remove any objections that may have been primarily associated with implementation and could have taken away the primary objective of the bill which is extending Medicaid coverage for pregnant women to 12 months postpartum.
- Amendment 2 adds dental in the coverage requirements of the bill, which we know to be an integral part of overall health care services.

**BACKGROUND:**

A majority of the pregnancy-related deaths are preventable and often stem from lack of coverage and access to care in the critical time following birth or from changes in coverage that can disrupt continuity of care. Approximately 60% of pregnancy-related deaths reviewed by state maternal mortality review committees from 2011 to 2015 were preventable, regardless of race.

To improve the health for both mothers and babies, this bill extends the postpartum coverage period in Medicaid from the current 60 days to a full year or 12- month period. Medicaid is a key institution to alleviate some of the postpartum issues because nearly half of all U.S. births are financed by Medicaid, and in some states the rate is much higher.

**PURPOSE:**

Key reasons for extending Medicaid postpartum coverage beyond 60 days postpartum are:

- To address the loss of insurance or gaps in coverage among postpartum women in both expansion and non-expansion states;
- The 12-month postpartum period would allow a new mother to stay on coverage automatically (just as she does now for 60 days);
- By extending the Medicaid postpartum coverage period to 12 months, new mothers do not have to switch from their providers who have knowledge of their health history and in many cases are treating various chronic conditions during this vulnerable time;
- Improves child health outcomes -- for example, maternal depression negatively impacts a young child's cognitive and social-emotional development
- Saves billions of dollars in annual severe maternal morbidity costs

For these reasons, I ask you for a favorable report on SB 923.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mary Washington".

Senator Mary Washington, District 43, Baltimore City