



November 19, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader Schumer:

On behalf of March of Dimes, the nation's leading nonprofit organization fighting for the health of all moms and babies, I write to thank you for prioritizing maternal and infant health in the *Build Back Better Act* which has now passed the House. During this critical time of enduring COVID-19, the health of our nation's mothers, infants and families must be a priority. Even before the pandemic, our nation was confronted with a maternal health crisis, and since, we have sadly seen a further decline in maternal and infant health in the U.S.

An estimated 700 women die from complications related to pregnancy each year and more than 60,000 other women experience life-threatening complications due to labor and delivery. Additionally, one in five women are affected by anxiety, depression, and other maternal mental health conditions during the postpartum period. It is well documented that the threat of maternal mortality and morbidity is especially acute for women of color. Furthermore, Black and American Indian/Alaskan native babies being twice as likely as White babies to die before their first birthday.

We applaud the inclusion of the permanent and mandatory extensions of full Medicaid and CHIP benefits for eligible pregnant and postpartum women for up to one year. This policy change will importantly ensure states provide coverage after the current 60 days ensuring new mothers do not lose coverage during the year following childbirth when approximately 30 percent of pregnancy-related deaths take place.

You have also taken a major step forward by providing a historic down payment on key policies from the *Black Maternal Health Omnibus Act of 2021* (H.R. 959/S. 346) to address maternal health equity and disparities in maternal health outcomes. We are also pleased to see that a national paid family and medical leave program was included in the Build Back Better Act due to your leadership and we are hopeful that it remains in the final legislation when it is considered by the Senate.

Furthermore, we are pleased to see the inclusion of coverage provisions that would:

- Take significant steps towards closing the Medicaid coverage gap, a key measure to improve health equity;
- Extend enhanced health insurance tax credits for ACA coverage;
- Make CHIP permanent removing the potential for lapses in authorization that threaten the program's stability and children's continued access to coverage;
- Expand continuous eligibility in the Medicaid program, helping kids keep their health care coverage; and



- Extend the expanded Child Tax Credit that was provided under the ARPA.

However, Congress cannot stop here if we want to reverse our nation's maternal and infant health crisis. Congress must pursue policies to improve the care and support mothers and infants need to be healthy and have productive lives.

We are grateful for your dedication and leadership on behalf of mothers and infants, and look forward to working with you to ensure they continue to be prioritized, including seeing that the full Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act advances in its entirety. We urge the swift enactment of the Build Back Better Act. Please direct any follow-up questions to KJ Hertz, Senior Director, Federal Affairs (khertz@marchofdimes.org, 571.969.8655).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stacey D. Stewart'.

Stacey D. Stewart
President & CEO

CC:

The Honorable Frank Pallone
The Honorable Richard Neal
The Honorable Bobby Scott
The Honorable Patty Murray
The Honorable Ron Wyden