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SUMMARY OF HOUSE BILL 59 POSTPARTUM MEDICAID EXTENSION

HB 59 extends postpartum Medicaid coverage from 60 days to 12 months. Extending postpartum Medicaid to 12 months is one evidence-based action the department can take to support growing families in Alaska. This action will support department efforts to improve maternal health outcomes for Alaskans. It is also a recommendation of the Alaska Maternal Child Death Review Committee. In 2018, the Alaska Maternal Child Death Review Committee found that all ten maternal deaths reviewed that year were preventable. Continued access to healthcare is associated with detection and early intervention essential to improving long-term mother and baby health outcomes.

Why pursue this policy now?

In 2020 section 9812 of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) added the time-limited option allowing states to extend postpartum coverage from the required 60 days to 12 months for eligible beneficiaries through March 1, 2027. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 (CAA-2023) revised ARPA to make this optional coverage extension permanent.

Why is HB 59 needed?

In Alaska, the legislature approves all optional groups for Medicaid coverage. While the coverage of pregnant women for 60 days is not optional, extending the benefit for the full 12 months is optional.

What is the benefit of HB 59?

This expansion is significant because moving between health plans leads to gaps in care associated with increased use of the emergency room and poorer health outcomes. With extended postpartum coverage, women are much more likely to have access to continuous, regular primary care that is less costly than emergent services. Additionally, when mothers have access to primary care, there is a direct correlation to increased care for infants and children.

What organizations support postpartum Medicaid Extension?

Postpartum Medicaid extension has been at the forefront of the national healthcare discussion. Accordingly, the following national organizations support extension of postpartum Medicaid coverage: The American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists, the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine, the American College of Physicians, the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Hospital Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American College of Cardiology, the American Osteopathic Association, and the March of Dimes.