



March 15, 2023

Members of the House Finance Committee
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, AK 99801

Sent via email

Dear Representatives Edgemon, Foster, Johnson, Coulombe, Cronk, Stapp, Tomaszewski, Galvin, Hannan, Josephson and Ortiz,

The Mat-Su Health Foundation (MSHF) shares ownership in Mat-Su Regional Medical Center and invests its share of the hospital's profits back into the community through grants, scholarships and systems change work to improve the health and wellness of Mat-Su residents. On behalf of the MSHF Board of Directors, I am writing to express support for HB 59 to extend Medicaid eligibility for postpartum mothers to one year.

The Mat-Su Health Foundation is advocating for HB 59 because this legislation will improve maternal and child health, reduce pregnancy-related death and positively impact the strength and wellness of Alaska families. The postpartum period is an especially vulnerable time for all new parents, but especially for those mothers who face other challenges, including but not limited to chronic complex medical conditions, behavioral health issues and recovery from substance use disorders.

Data shows that 14% of Alaska mothers who gave birth in 2020 had symptoms of postpartum depression. A mother cannot provide the healthy environment and supports that her baby needs if she herself is not receiving adequate medical care. When mom has access to healthcare, baby is more likely to receive it too. Parental enrollment in Medicaid is associated with a 29% higher probability that a child will receive an annual well-child visit with a healthcare provider.

Lack of insurance coverage and coverage disruptions do more than harm the health of new mothers and their children; they also contribute to preventable maternal deaths nationally and here in Alaska. HB 59 addresses this by ensuring continuity of coverage for new mothers in Alaska where 51% of all births are covered by Medicaid. This legislation can be truly lifesaving: in 2021, Alaska's overall pregnancy-associated death rate exceeded the previous 5-year average by 109%, and 88% of Alaska's pregnancy-associated deaths during 2016-2022 were potentially preventable.

Please support HB 59 by moving it out of committee and onto the floor for a full vote.

Sincerely,

President and CEO
Mat-Su Health Foundation