

Wilmington, Delaware
June 2, 2022

#0174

WHEREAS, House Bill (HB) No. 234 is an act to amend Title 31 of the Delaware Code

Sponsor:

to extend Medicaid coverage from the current limit of 60 days following a pregnancy, or

**Council
Member
Darby**

postpartum, to 12 months after delivery. Approximately one-third of maternal deaths occur during pregnancy, but 52 percent occur following delivery, or postpartum. According to the

Co-Sponsors:

Center for Disease Control (CDC), about two-thirds of these deaths are preventable. HB No.

**Council
Members
Cabrera
Mills**

234 provides postpartum women with greater access to healthcare so that medical professionals can identify and treat maternal health conditions before they result in life-threatening complications. This proposed bill can be instrumental in decreasing maternal mortality generally and reducing racial and economic disparities in maternal mortality in particular; and

WHEREAS, the United States' maternal death rates are currently among the worst when compared to other high-income countries, specifically with regards to late maternal deaths, or fatalities occurring more than six weeks postpartum. In 2020, 861 women died in this country from pregnancy-related health complications, which was an increase from 754 women in the previous year; and

WHEREAS, for every death, there are 70 severe maternal morbidity events, where unexpected problems caused short or long-term injuries or disabilities as a result of labor or delivery. The leading causes of postpartum deaths are severe bleeding, blood clots, infection, cardiovascular complications and mental health-related conditions, such as death by suicide and substance abuse induced by postpartum depression. One in seven women experience postpartum depression, and nearly half of these cases are not diagnosed by a health professional; and

WHEREAS, during the postpartum recovery period, women experience complex physical, emotional and psychological challenges that require ongoing support and monitoring from medical professionals. Without access to health insurance coverage during the postpartum period, women are more vulnerable to health complications and delayed diagnosis of treatable conditions; and

WHEREAS, poverty and race are linked to persistent maternal health disparities. Those living in poverty, which is a key eligibility requirement for receiving Medicaid coverage, face higher barriers to care and are at increased risk of maternal morbidity. In Delaware, 20 percent of Black women live in poverty, compared to 9% of White women. Low-income Black women in this State are more likely to be uninsured, and 11 percent of Black women of child-bearing age lack health insurance. This creates gaps in health coverage that place Black women in imminent danger of experiencing pregnancy-related injury or death; and

WHEREAS, severe maternal morbidity rose by 37 percent in recent years in Delaware; 53 percent of these deaths were preventable. Black women in the State die from pregnancy-related complications three to four times as often as White women; and

WHEREAS, the poverty rate is high in Wilmington, especially among Black women. The City of Wilmington ranks highest in the State, across indicators, for negative maternal health outcomes. Extending postpartum medical coverage from 60 days after delivery under federal Medicaid regulations to 12 months from the end of pregnancy would positively impact maternal health in the City of Wilmington and throughout the State of Delaware.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WILMINGTON that the Wilmington City Council supports HB No. 234 and welcomes the

proposed amendments to Title 31 of the Delaware Code that would provide health insurance coverage to Medicaid recipients through the first year of their postpartum recovery; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Legislative body strongly encourages your support for the passage of HB No. 234.

Passed by City Council,

ATTEST: _____
City Clerk

SYNOPSIS: This Resolution expresses strong support from the Wilmington City Council for the passage of House Bill No. 234 which is an act to amend Title 31 of the Delaware Code to extend Medicaid coverage from the current limit of 60 days following a pregnancy, or postpartum, to 12 months after delivery. This will improve the quality of maternal health care and ensure access healthcare to reduce preventable pregnancy-related deaths and improve maternal health outcomes.