



## WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

Department of Health Services, Division of Medicaid Services  
Attn: Wisconsin 1115 Postpartum Coverage Waiver  
PO Box 309  
Madison, WI 53707-0309

*Submitted via electronic mail to [dhspostpartumcoverage1115waiver@dhs.wisconsin.gov](mailto:dhspostpartumcoverage1115waiver@dhs.wisconsin.gov)*

May 6, 2022

Re: Comments in Support of Wisconsin Postpartum Section 1115 Demonstration Waiver Application

To Whom It May Concern:

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC), the public policy voice of the state's Catholic bishops, supports the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) in its request for a five-year Medicaid 1115 research and demonstration waiver, which would allow the state to extend postpartum Medicaid coverage from 60 days to 90 days for women whose household income is above 100% of the federal poverty level (FPL).

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an increasing number of pregnant women in the U.S. suffer from serious conditions like diabetes, heart disease, and hypertension.<sup>1</sup> Left untreated, these chronic conditions can endanger women's lives after they give birth. Indeed, over 40 percent of maternal deaths occur postpartum.<sup>2</sup>

Postpartum women are also at higher risk for depression, which if not properly treated can lead to chronic depressive disorder. Maternal depression has profound effects on children. Research shows that "Children of mothers who have untreated postpartum depression are more likely to have emotional and behavioral problems, such as sleeping and eating difficulties, excessive crying, and delays in language development."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Pregnancy Mortality Surveillance System. <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternal-mortality/pregnancy-mortality-surveillance-system.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Petersen EE, Davis NL, Goodman D, et al. *Vital Signs: Pregnancy-Related Deaths, United States, 2011–2015, and Strategies for Prevention, 13 States, 2013–2017*. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2019; 68:423–429. [http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6818e1external icon](http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6818e1external%20icon) (Table 2).

<sup>3</sup> Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2009). Maternal Depression Can Undermine the Development of Young Children: Working Paper No. 8. [www.developingchild.harvard.edu](http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu).

Postpartum coverage is especially critical for women of color. American Indian/Alaska Native and Black women are 2 to 3 times as likely to die from a pregnancy-related cause than white women.<sup>4</sup>

Wisconsin Medicaid currently pays for more than four in ten births, a clear indication that there are many vulnerable women and children in our state. For their sake, and that of the common good, everything must be done to ensure that they receive proper care.

This past session, the WCC supported Senate Bill 562, which would have extended postpartum coverage from 60 days to one year. We hope that one day a similar bill will become law, but for now, we strongly support the proposed waiver.

Sincerely,



Kim Vercauteren  
Executive Director

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<sup>4</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Infographic: Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Pregnancy-Related Deaths—United States, 2007–2016. <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternal-mortality/disparities-pregnancy-related-deaths/infographic.html>