

Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Hartley, Representative Dathan and esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Marijane Carey. I am a Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Consultant and live in Hamden. This testimony is being submitted on behalf of the CT Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Coalition and Every Woman CT (EWCT). The MCH Coalition is a representative group of more than 78 health care providers, human service organizations and advocates working in concert with the state's maternal and child health population. EWCT is a pre/interconception health care initiative that supports the health of women and men in their childbearing years. It is also being submitted on behalf of Connecticut's pregnant women, children, mothers, and fathers who are experiencing gaps in the quality of their lives that mirror differences in socioeconomic status, racial and ethnic background, and education level. ⁱ

This testimony is in regard to the Governor's Proposed FY 2022-2023 Budget for Human Services.

The pandemic has exacerbated disparities in economic stability, health care, education, housing, and food security forcing many families into impossible situations.ⁱⁱ Medicaid provides health care coverage so that limited resources can be used to cover other essential needs, such as housing, food, and utilities without compromising access to health care services.

Diapers are a basic health need that no family in CT should have to worry about affording. The Diaper Bank of Connecticut, in collaboration with partners throughout the state, has demonstrated its ability to ensure, effectively and efficiently, that households with infants and toddlers lacking the resources to purchase diapers have an adequate number of clean diapers. It is imperative that the Diaper Bank is adequately funded, especially during this pandemic when the need for diapers is growing exponentially.

Therefore, we strongly urge you to amend this budget to:

- Restore eligibility for parents of children with HUSKY A coverage to 201% FPL. Under this HUSKY expansion, a family of three earning less than \$43,660/year would have immediate access to dependable, high-quality health insurance. A family of four earning less than \$52,660/year would be eligible, and so on. This coverage for parents is essential in order to foster a caring and safe environment for their children without having the stress of worrying about their health care issues and any medical/mental health bills that might be incurred as a result of seeking care.
- Expand postpartum Medicaid coverage up to a year after giving birth. This expansion of coverage allows for ongoing care and support to those women who experienced pregnancy complications or have chronic conditions, such as hypertension or diabetes. It also supports women who need help with mental health issues, which is an escalating reality for mothers in the age of COVID.

Maternal morbidity and mortality, especially for Black women, is a major area of concern and expanding postpartum Medicaid coverage up to a year will help to address some of these concerns with the overall goal of keeping Medicaid-insured mothers alive and healthy. This expansion would affect approximately 14,237 women who give birth each year. (This is based on the 37,467 births in 2016, of which 38% were Medicaid covered.ⁱⁱⁱ)

The recently released report *Maternal Mortality in Connecticut, Maternal Mortality Review Committee Data, 2015-2017* includes as one of its recommendations, expanding Medicaid coverage to one year postpartum. This recommendation is supported by the following key findings of the report:

- Of the 11 pregnancy-related deaths of CT residents in 2015-2017, 7 out of the 11 were due to medical disorders and 3 deaths were due to mental health conditions. (One cause of death could not be determined.)

- Over 80% of these deaths were determined to be preventable
- About 64% of the pregnancy related deaths were those of black and Latinx people. By contrast, persons of color accounted for about 45% of live births between 2015 and 2017. ^{iv}
- Keep the Diaper Bank of Connecticut's funding allocation at its current level of \$333,000 per year. Without enough diapers, too many caregivers will be forced to miss work or school because they do not have enough diapers to send their babies to childcare.

Thank you.

ⁱ Minority Health, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, March 1, 2018, <https://www.niaid.nih.gov/research/minority-health>, February 18, 2020

ⁱⁱ DataHaven, <https://www.cthealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/DataHaven-Health-Equity-Connecticut-061820.pdf>, June 2020

ⁱⁱⁱ National Center for Health statistics, final natality data 2018. Retrieved February 21, 2021, from www.marchofdimes.org/peristats.

^{iv} Maternal Mortality in CT, Maternal Mortality Review Committee Data, 215-2017, December 2020 https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DPH/Maternal-Mortality/CT-MMR-Evaluation-Report-2015-2017-FINAL_PRINT.pdf