



January 26, 2022

Senator John Arch, Chair  
Members of the Health and Human Services Committee  
Nebraska Legislature

Re: LB929

Chairman Arch and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

I am writing in support of LB929, Senator Wishart's bill to extend postpartum coverage in Medicaid from 60 days to a full year. A few highlights of why this change would be beneficial for Nebraska mothers and babies:

- The first year of a baby's life is the most critical, and when a mother has unmet medical needs it can have long-lasting impacts for baby. For example, multiple studies have shown that when a mother is diagnosed with depression and it goes untreated, it can lead to issues for baby such as attachment disorder and cognitive delays.
- Practically, aligning mother's coverage with her baby's makes sense. With LB929 both mother and baby would need to re-enroll in coverage for one year after birth.
- Supporting mothers beyond the first 60 days of their baby's life is something several other states are moving toward, including Nebraska's neighbors Missouri, Colorado, and Minnesota
- Current Medicaid coverage for mothers in Nebraska goes up to 199% FPL, whereas in the expansion category coverage goes up to 138% FPL. LB929 would capture and support new mothers who fall in the gap between these two poverty levels.

A few technical notes for you to consider:

- You'll note the language of LB929 calls for Nebraska DHHS to seek federal approval for matching funds through a state plan amendment (SPA) or a waiver. This is because under ARPA the extension of postpartum coverage is offered through a SPA, however, there are several pending federal bills relative to the extension that ask agencies to submit a waiver. By including both options for DHHS, it allows the agency to be nimble in response to changes to federal offerings.
- The language of LB929 also uses the term "beneficiaries" because the extension of postpartum coverage will not only impact women in the "pregnant woman" category in Medicaid, rather it must reach all pregnant individuals in every category.
- While it is not noted in the bill itself, the ARPA option expires May 31, 2027.

- Currently there has been declared a federal public health emergency (PHE) which has required states to keep anyone enrolled in Medicaid on the program during the length of the PHE. The PHE was renewed January 14, 2022, and now expires April 16, 2022. Upon expiration, the requirement for ongoing eligibility would be lifted beginning May 1. States will need to start rolling renewals for Medicaid and LB929's passage would assist the agency in prioritizing renewals for populations other than pregnant women.
- Currently, extension of postpartum coverage is offered at the current federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP) for whatever category an individual is in within Medicaid, but CMS' most recent guidance would allow DHHS to seamlessly transfer a postpartum woman into a higher matching rate category (i.e., the expansion category) electronically, as long as they don't ask for additional information from a new mother. This ability to seamlessly transfer mothers between categories could result in additional matching funds for this population.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sara Howard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sara Howard  
Policy Advisor  
First Five Nebraska