



Chairman Frank Pallone
2107 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Greg Walden
2185 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

January 21, 2020

Dear Chairman Pallone and Ranking Member Walden,

The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) is writing to express our support for H.R. 4996, the Helping Medicaid Offer Maternity Services (Helping MOMS) Act of 2019 which would incentivize states to provide important and needed, extended Medicaid coverage to individuals during the postpartum period. CLASP is a national, non-partisan, nonprofit organization with over fifty years of experience advocating for policy solutions that improve the lives of people with low incomes. We work across issue areas that impact families with low-incomes (e.g. health insurance, early education, mental health, policy related to youth and young adults, and explicitly on maternal mental health) to advocate for policy at the local, state, and federal level that will improve the health and well-being of the poorest people in our country..

Medicaid is a lifeline for families with low incomes allowing them to access physical and mental health care that they otherwise wouldn't be able to. States have great flexibility to implement Medicaid policy that best meets the needs of the individuals and families in their state. However, in most states, new mothers currently only have access to Medicaid for a very short time after the birth of their child. H.R. 4996 would extend this coverage for up to one year postpartum. It could also help close stark racial inequities in maternal mortality, morbidity, and other health outcomes. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), for every 100,000 live births in the United States, roughly 41 Black women, 30 American Indian and Alaskan Native women, 13 White women, die from pregnancy-related causes. Of these maternal deaths, an estimated 60 percent are preventable. The Helping MOMS Act rightfully recognizes that Medicaid can play a significant role in addressing this problem. Medicaid is the payor of nearly 50 percent of births in this country.

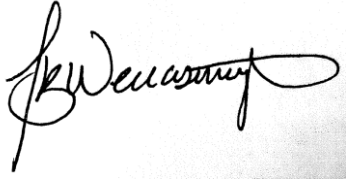
H.R. 4996 would have positive effects upon children and families nationwide. Extending the postpartum period is critically important for the short- and long-term well-being of children and families. Medicaid coverage for mothers would be an incredible benefit to ensure that mothers have access to preventive services, screening, and treatment for maternal mental health concerns in the postpartum period. Young children's health is intertwined with the health of their caregivers; when the adults in their lives suffer, they do as well. Unfortunately, there are many treatable illnesses such as postpartum depression that are prevalent during this time period but underdiagnosed and undertreated because of lack of access to insurance and care.

In a [scan](#) of state policies CLASP conducted a few years ago, we found that Medicaid expansion made a significant difference for states. Many of the stakeholders we spoke with indicated that expanded postpartum coverage would have a profound effect on the ability to be identified through screening and link with seek subsequent treatment. Our [current work](#) on maternal mental health across 9 states and

Washington, D.C. confirms this.

CLASP supports H.R. 4996 for its potential to increase access to Medicaid, decrease health inequities, and promote health for children and families across the country. Please contact Isha Weerasinghe at iweerasinghe@clasp.org with any questions or follow up.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Isha Weerasinghe", written in a cursive style.

Isha Weerasinghe
Senior Policy Analyst