

**An Act relative to expanding equitable access to maternal postpartum care  
HB 1297 / SB 799**

**Lead Sponsors:** Rep. Liz Miranda and Sen. Joan Lovely

**Background**

Maternal mortality is a growing health crisis in the United States. While the majority of pregnancy-related deaths are preventable, they are [increasing at an alarming rate](#). Medicaid plays an important role in improving maternal and perinatal outcomes. [Timely postpartum visits](#) provide an opportunity to address chronic health conditions, such as diabetes and hypertension; mental health status, including postpartum depression; and substance use disorders. Under current federal rules, pregnant and birthing individuals who are eligible for Medicaid on the basis of their pregnancy only receive coverage during their pregnancy and 60 days postpartum. This timeframe is not sufficient to address the medical and socioemotional needs of the postpartum period.

**Why is this legislation important?**

- Massachusetts has expanded MassHealth to more low-income residents, including pregnant and birthing individuals. Yet, some postpartum individuals experience disruptions in coverage and care under current eligibility rules, leading to delays in identifying and treating pressing health challenges.
- For every person who dies from pregnancy-related causes, another 70 suffer from severe physical illness or disability, including behavioral health conditions.
- In Massachusetts, [MassHealth covers 35% of births](#). Medicaid-enrolled pregnant women are more likely than women with private coverage to have certain chronic conditions, preterm births or low birthweight babies, putting them at higher risk for poor maternal outcomes.
- [Pregnancy-associated mortality](#) increased 33% in Massachusetts between 2012 and 2014, the latest time period for which publicly available data is available.

**Why is this a health equity issue?**

- Individuals of color are more likely than white individuals to die or experience serious illness and injury due to pregnancy-related causes.
- Black birthing individuals have pregnancy-related mortality rates that are over [three times higher](#) than the rate for white birthing individuals.
- Black, Indigenous and People of Color make up a disproportionate share of Medicaid enrollees – [52.6%](#) of MassHealth members.

**What does this legislation do?**

This legislation would:

- Direct MassHealth to seek approval from the federal government to extend postpartum coverage from 60 days to 12 months.
- Sets the stage for continuous coverage during a critical time, impacting the long-term health and well-being of pregnant and birthing individuals, their families and their communities.

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