

MaineHealth Local Health Systems

Franklin Community
Health Network
LincolnHealth
MaineHealth Care At Home
Maine Behavioral Healthcare
Memorial Hospital
Maine Medical Center
NorDx
Pen Bay Medical Center
Southern Maine Health Care
Synernet
Waldo County General Hospital
Western Maine Health

Part of the MaineHealth Family

MaineHealth Accountable
Care Organization

MaineHealth Affiliates

MaineGeneral Health
Mid Coast-Parkview Health
New England Rehabilitation
Hospital of Portland
St. Mary's Health System

Testimony of Nancy Green APRN-CNM, MaineHealth in Support of LD 265

“An Act To Provide Women Access to Affordable Postpartum Care”

Wednesday, February 24, 2021

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Nancy Green, and I am here to testify in support of LD 265, “An Act To Provide Women Access to Affordable Postpartum Care.”

MaineHealth is Maine’s largest integrated non-profit health care system that provides a full continuum of health care services to the residents of eleven counties in Maine and one in New Hampshire. As part of our mission of “Working Together So Maine’s Communities are the Healthiest in America,” MaineHealth, we strongly support increasing access to affordable health care. In fact, MaineHealth has established a policy to provide Free Care to all patients with incomes at or below 200% of the poverty level.

With that said, we strongly support extending MaineCare coverage for pregnant women to twelve months postpartum. According to the most recent Maine Maternal, Fetal and Infant Mortality Review Panel Annual Report, in 2018-2019, of the pregnancy-associated deaths among Maine women, 77% occurred 43-365 days after the end of pregnancy – in most cases when a woman’s access to MaineCare coverage has ended. 64% of the pregnancy-associated deaths in 2018-2019 were due to injury-related causes, including overdoses, homicides, and suicides, and over 36% were due to a cause related to or aggravated by pregnancy, including cardiovascular diseases, infections, hemorrhages, cardiomyopathy, and embolisms. How many of these deaths could have been prevented if the mother had access to continuous, uninterrupted coverage and care?

As a Certified Nurse Midwife, I have cared for thousands of women both in a rural setting in Washington County and at Maine Medical Center in Portland. I have cared for patients who have pressing health challenges before and during their pregnancy, including, but not limited to, hypertension, diabetes, anemia, breast and cervical cancer, depression, and substance use disorder, which do not go away at six weeks postpartum. Over the years, I have encountered hundreds of women that desired either permanent or long-acting reversible contraception, after pregnancy. But for a variety of reasons, they were not able to attend their six week postpartum visit and could certainly not afford any form of contraception without insurance. As a consequence, many of them unfortunately had a short pregnancy interval, which in many cases can become high risk. Another example, women who show pap smear abnormalities during their pregnancy, are recommended to follow up at their six week postpartum

visit for further evaluation and treatment. This is cancer care, and any lack of follow up and postponement of necessary treatment, due to absence of insurance, could have tragic consequences.

The absence of health insurance is deeply troubling given what we know about the postpartum period. Moms who struggle with these conditions are left unsupported and may not be able to seek help. Gaps in health insurance coverage during this critical time, the fourth trimester through the first year, can contribute to rising maternal morbidity and mortality rates. Comprehensive care and continuous coverage during this twelve month period are essential.

To keep mothers and babies safe, we should extend MaineCare coverage through the first year.

Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.