



May 6, 2022

Department of Health Services, Division of Medicaid Services
PO Box 309
Madison, Wisconsin 53703-0309

Attn: Wisconsin 1115 Postpartum Coverage Waiver

To Whom it May Concern:

UW Health is home to Wisconsin's #1-ranked hospital and is among the nation's leading academic medical centers, according to US News and World Report. Our health system, in partnership with the UW School of Medicine and Public Health, is committed to supporting patients from all socioeconomic backgrounds through our service, science, scholarship and social responsibility. We are particularly keen to improve the health and well-being of Wisconsin birthing people and babies which is demonstrated by our work as a member of the Dane County Health Council in partnership with the Foundation for Black Women's Wellness, and the innovative Connect Rx project which just recently launched in Wisconsin.

We write today to endorse the Department of Health Services' effort to extend Medicaid post-partum coverage to 90 days from the current 60 days by securing an 1115 research and demonstration waiver. We believe this is a step in the right direction; however, we would like to see coverage extended to one year. In fact, experts in infant and maternal mortality contend Medicaid benefits should be extended up to a year following birth because pregnancy-related medical conditions, chronic health conditions, and even death can occur up to one-year post-partum. As evidence of that fact, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends screening patients for post-partum depression which can occur up to one year after giving birth. It is defined by intense feelings of sadness, anxiety, or despair that prevent new parents from being able to perform daily tasks. These feelings are brought on by changes in hormone levels; a history of depression; emotional factors such as whether the baby was planned/unplanned; fatigue; and lifestyle factors such as support from others, moving to a new city, death of a loved one, etc. Treatment usually involves anti-depressants prescribed by a doctor or APP, combined with talk therapy that needs to be available to the patient for up to a year. If left untreated, post-partum depression can have dire consequences for families as the birthing parent is left unable to adequately care for themselves and their baby.

Furthermore, it is imperative that we find ways to prevent pregnancy-related deaths for all but the need is even more urgent among birthing people of color. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Black, American Indian and Alaska Native women are two to three times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than non-Hispanic White women. Sadly, disparities in Wisconsin are in many cases even worse than national trends. A Black woman in Wisconsin is 5 times more likely to die of maternal mortality than a white woman in Wisconsin.

It is alarming that despite advances in modern healthcare and science, the United States ranks among the worst developed nations for maternal care. We must reverse this trend and improve access to postpartum care for families.

We applaud leaders at the Department of Health Services for initiating this important step forward in improving outcomes for Medicaid-covered patients by seeking an 1115 waiver from the federal government. Please know you have the full support of our health system's leadership as you employ this tool to attain the goals outlined in your application.

- Reduce the morbidity and mortality of birthing people for Medicaid members in Wisconsin.
- Support the long-term fiscal sustainability of the Medicaid program in Wisconsin.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact Connie Schulze, Director of Government Affairs at 608/516-2552 if you have any questions regarding this submission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alan S. Kaplan". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Alan S. Kaplan, MD
CEO