

Testimony in support of HF 521

MN House Health Finance and Policy committee

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Madame chair and committee members. My name is Dr. Sheldon Berkowitz and I am a pediatrician and also the president of the Minnesota Chapter of the American Academy of pediatrics – a group of almost 1000 pediatricians across the state with the mission of protecting and advancing the health of every child and adolescent in Minnesota. I am here on behalf of our Chapter to speak in support of HF 521 which would extend Medicaid postpartum coverage from 60 days to 12 months.

The United States has the highest maternal mortality rate of all industrialized nations. This rate is also not equal among all groups in MN with the maternal death rates for Black and Indigenous women over 30 years old being 4-5 times higher than for white women.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one in three pregnancy related deaths occurs in the postpartum period which extends to one full year after delivery, with 30% of these deaths occurring after 6 weeks postpartum. In Minnesota, over 40% of all births are to women on Medicaid.

Expanding Medicaid coverage for these women postpartum to one year, similar to what their infants have, will increase the chances that these women can receive the care they need.

While as pediatricians we focus on the well bring of children and adolescents, we are also acutely aware that especially in early childhood, the health and wellbeing of children depends on the health and wellbeing of their caregivers. If mothers are unable to access the care they need, they are less likely to be able to care for their children.

HF 521 will help to keep our state's mothers and their children healthy and I strongly urge you to pass the bill. Thank you.