

Access to Continuous Postpartum Care: Support Senate Bill 562 and Assembly Bill 592

The postpartum period is a medically vulnerable period for all women. Complications during pregnancy can include eclampsia, infection, or hemorrhage and require intensive care and lengthy hospital stays. Pregnancy related complications can surface up to a year after delivery. New mothers may also be dealing with postpartum depression or a host of other underlying medical conditions, all while caring for a newborn. The health and wellness of a mother has important implications for a baby's overall health including cognitive and social-emotional development. Continuous health care coverage is important in not only managing pregnancy related complications, but also to maintain access to mental health treatment, breastfeeding support, chronic disease management, and prescription drugs. Disruptions in health care coverage can adversely affect access to medically necessary health care during the postpartum period. Continuity in health care services during the postpartum period will help to address maternal morbidity and mortality, which disproportionately affects women in rural communities and women of color. Under BadgerCare Plus, Wisconsin provides medical assistance benefits to eligible pregnant women for up to 90 days postpartum. Eligibility for postpartum women is then reduced to 100 percent of the federal poverty level. Women who lose eligibility then need to find coverage in the private marketplace or through their employer (if offered), or they become uninsured. Senate Bill 562 and Assembly Bill 592 would maintain eligibility for postpartum women for the full 12-month postpartum period. This legislation will improve continuity of care and care coordination for new mothers, align coverage for both the mother and baby, and improve maternal and child health outcomes. Nearly 40 Wisconsin organizations support this bipartisan legislation and 25 states have either approved or pending legislation to extend coverage including Texas, Florida, Tennessee, Virginia, Ohio, Minnesota, Michigan, Indiana, and Illinois, among others.