



March 12, 2025

Senator Brian Hardin, Chairperson  
Members of the Health and Human Services  
Nebraska Legislature

RE: LB153

Chairperson Hardin and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

On behalf of First Five Nebraska (FFN), I am writing this letter of support for LB 153, Senator Guereca's bill to offer postpartum coverage for mothers who receive their prenatal care through the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Mothers covered under the unborn child option in CHIP (in Nebraska called CHIP 599 moms) currently lose coverage the month that they give birth.

*Statutory History of CHIP 599 Mothers and Postpartum Coverage*

On November 30, 2009 Nebraska DHHS received a letter from Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) informing the state of Nebraska that it was not allowed to cover prenatal care for undocumented mothers utilizing the Medicaid program (of note: at the time this practice had been in place for 20 years). The letter indicated that while Medicaid funding could not be used, the state could utilize state matching funds from CHIP under the unborn child option. At the time, Governor Heineman declined to make this administrative change and mothers ineligible for Medicaid/CHIP lost coverage.

In 2011, Senator Kathy Campbell introduced LB 599 to require the state to cover these mothers utilizing CHIP. The bill ultimately passed in 2012. The state of Nebraska now calls the program that covers mothers under the unborn child option "CHIP 599" mothers. Although LB 599 called for the prenatal coverage to be extended to undocumented mothers, when DHHS applied for the state plan amendment to CHIP to utilize the unborn child option, they learned that it must cover every mother who is ineligible for coverage, including minors whose parents income make them ineligible for coverage, and others.

In 2023, Senator Wishart introduced LB 419 to extend postpartum coverage for mothers covered by the Medicaid program. This bill was successfully passed in an HHS Committee package, however this postpartum extension does not cover CHIP 599 mothers.

LB 153 calls on DHHS to submit a state plan amendment to the Children's Health Insurance Program by October 1, 2025 for a Health Services Initiative to provide postpartum coverage for mothers covered under the unborn child option. It calls for this coverage to last at least 6 months, but nothing in the language would prevent DHHS from covering mothers for 12 months. Finally, it ensures that the benefits provided to the new mothers be identical to those offered to mothers covered by Medicaid.

Under the CHIP HSI option, states may use part of their annual allotments and receive the federal CHIP matching rate for expenditures associated with the HSI (Nebraska's matching rate is currently 68%).

States have substantial flexibility to determine the focus, scope, and design of Health Services Initiatives.

In conclusion, postpartum coverage for mothers can have a long term impact on baby and ensuring that this population of mothers receives this care is critical for children in Nebraska. Thank you for allowing me to testify today and again, I want to thank Senator Guereca for his strong support of mothers and babies in Nebraska.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sara Howard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sara Howard

Policy Advisor

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