

## **Governor Hochul's State of the State Proposals to Improve Maternal Health Includes Increasing Reimbursement Rates to Midwives under Medicaid**

The Constitution of New York State requires the Governor to deliver an annual message to the Legislature regarding the state of the state. The State of the State proposals are the first step in defining the Governor's agenda in 2022. The following are excerpts from Governor Kathy Hochul's address relevant to maternal health and midwifery care.

### **Part I-E: Advancing Health Equity: Ensure All Mothers in New York Get the Care They Need**

- Expand Medicaid Coverage for Postpartum Care
- Improve and Expand Access to Prenatal and Postnatal Care
- Expand Access to Midwifery Services Through Increased Reimbursement Rates

New York's maternal mortality rates have decreased significantly over the past 8 years, but the state still ranks just 28th in the U.S. in percentage of newborns with low birthweight (under 5 pounds, 8 ounces) and 42nd in percentage born preterm.

These health risks are experienced disproportionately by low-income individuals and communities of color. For example, the share of pregnant New Yorkers who receive no or late prenatal care is three times greater among Black mothers (10.7 percent) and two times greater among Hispanic mothers (6.5 percent) than white mothers (3.2 percent). Additionally, Black mothers experience a prevalence of low birthweight babies 5 percentage points higher than the state average, and a maternal mortality rate three times higher.

To improve maternal health outcomes, reduce racial disparities, and advance equity for mothers across the state, Governor Hochul will propose a set of robust and coordinated initiatives designed to expand access to holistic prenatal and postnatal care.

### **Expand Medicaid Coverage for Postpartum Care**

The federal ARPA bill of 2021 allows states to extend postpartum coverage under Medicaid from 60 days to a full year — a significant extension of this critical care. New York will work with the Biden Administration to provide year-long Medicaid postpartum coverage for mothers, leading to more equitable health outcomes across the state.

### **Improve and Expand Access to Prenatal and Postnatal Care**

Ensuring that all New York mothers get the prenatal and postnatal care they need requires enhanced coordination and access to a wider range of medical and behavioral health services. Governor Hochul will implement a holistic plan to improve care equity for new mothers across the state, including:

- Provide social work services delivered in clinic and non-clinic settings.
- Establish coverage for nutrition services by reimbursing registered dietitians for providing services to pregnant New Yorkers.
- Reimburse community health workers for delivering care coordination and other peer support services in maternal health settings.
- Increase availability of dyadic therapy, in which patient and baby receive services that promote positive parent-child interaction, including through an Office of Mental Health (OMH) and DOH

partnership that will expand the New York State Healthy Steps program and fully integrate behavioral health professionals into pediatric primary care well-child visits (described more below).

- Engage in other interventions in high-risk communities.
- Close gaps in physical infrastructure, such as fetal ultrasound equipment, and in human infrastructure, such as Maternal Fetal Medicine specialists who can assess and recommend treatment during pregnancy.
- Encourage innovation and use of digital health services within the maternal health care journey.

### **Expand Access to Midwifery Services Through Increased Reimbursement Rates**

As a complement to the previous proposal, New York will increase reimbursement rates for midwifery services in an effort to expand access to this critical care and strengthen the midwife workforce.

Additionally, to incentivize more midwives to accept lower-income patients, Medicaid reimbursement rate for midwife maternal services would be increased to better align with medical practitioners who also perform deliveries.