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March for Moms Calls on Congress to Support Pregnant and Birthing People During Pandemic

CARES Act supports families, falls short of strengthening health care system for vulnerable patients

Washington, DC--Today, March for Moms, which brings together maternal health advocates to improve care for pregnant and birthing people, calls on Congress to take further action to support pregnant and birthing people as they face unprecedented health care challenges as a result of the coronavirus' impact on the nation's health care system. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act of 2020, which was signed into law today by President Donald J. Trump, makes significant investments in health systems and the health care workforce. However, the bill falls short of improving health care for pregnant and birthing people, whose needs are being deprioritized as health care providers anticipate the growing impact of the pandemic.

"Even before the pandemic hit, our country was one of the most dangerous in which to give birth. Now, pregnant and birthing people (and those who care for them and support them) are more vulnerable than ever as health care systems and clinicians are prioritizing patients with COVID-19, prenatal and postpartum care is being limited, and visitation and labor support professional policies are changing to allow one or no people to accompany birthing people," said Katie Shea Barrett, Executive Director of March for Moms. "Most dire, Labor and Delivery units are being closed to make room for COVID-19 cases. During these uncertain times, we must continue to be strong advocates for the support and dignity of mothers. This moment

presents us with an opportunity to be creative about how we approach meaningful policy change for the mothers and families who now, more than ever, need our support.”

March for Moms is calling on lawmakers to expand access to and payment for telehealth throughout pregnancy and postpartum; increase access to and expansion of midwifery-led models and birth centers; and prioritize and include families, and women in particular, when making challenging policy decisions at the Federal, State and health system levels.

“We commend the Members of Congress and Administration for working swiftly and tirelessly to meet the incredible needs of families in this public health crisis. We are particularly pleased to see the strong support for paid leave, Medicaid continuation for pregnant people, and the financial support for states to address families' needs locally. At the same time, many unmet needs remain for growing families in particular which must be addressed as quickly as possible. This is particularly urgent for families with low-wage workers, immigrants and women of color, who already face deep inequities in maternal health outcomes and unjust barriers to health and well-being,” said Barrett.

The passage of the CARES Act builds on two other pieces of legislation designed to aid in COVID-19 preparedness and response. On March 4, 2020, the House passed the [Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2020](#), which includes, among other things, provisions that waive certain telehealth requirements during the COVID-19 public health emergency to ensure Medicare beneficiaries can receive telehealth services at home to avoid placing themselves at greater risk of the virus. The Families First legislation, passed into law on March 18, 2020, covers a broad range of programs affecting growing families and moms in particular, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Women, Infants and Children’s Program (WIC), family and medical leave, emergency paid sick leave, and Medicaid. While these measures support families, they do not include specific measures to account for states and health care providers closing Labor and Delivery units, hospitals restricting labor support so people are giving birth alone, and diminished prenatal and postnatal care.

In the coming weeks, March for Moms will be calling on Congress to take action, and bringing together advocates, pregnant and birthing people, and survivors to share their stories. For more information, visit www.marchformoms.org.

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March for Moms is non-partisan, 501 ©(3) non-profit that aligns the diverse voices of families, health care providers, policymakers, and partners to advocate for mothers and families’ health, well-being and equal access to care. For more information, visit <https://marchformoms.org/>.

