THE MORE YOU KNOW

Postpartum Coverage

We are dismayed at Gov. Lee’s decision to cut a TennCare postpartum coverage pilot program from the state budget while continuing to add money to the state’s “rainy day fund”. If this isn’t a rainy day, then we don’t know what is.

The pilot program would expand postpartum coverage for new mothers to a full year. Abandoning this pilot program just to save $6.6 million has a cost that far exceeds the savings. It means poor health outcomes for moms and babies, even death. This decision, along with our lack of Medicaid expansion, shows Gov. Lee does not value policies that would save lives.

Tennessee is currently ranked 41st in maternal mortality, moving down 8 spots from the previous year. We were the 48th state to consider providing a pathway to postpartum care beyond 60 days, and now it’s not going to happen. The state was motivated to provide a longer period of postpartum coverage after finding that 52 women suffered preventable deaths after giving birth in 2019. Preventable deaths of brand-new mothers are devastating and are sadly part of a bigger issue of women dying who are in the Medicaid coverage gap. This small expansion would have been a step in the right direction, but we know full Medicaid expansion increases access to preventive care, reduces adverse health outcomes before, during and after pregnancies, and reduces maternal mortality rates.

Not funding this program will further increase health disparities. There are many examples of how systemic racism shows up in health outcomes and access to health care. Black moms and babies are dying at significantly higher
rates than non-black moms and babies in the U.S. Even after the ACA largely reduced the level of uninsured people in America, black people are still almost twice as likely to be uninsured than white people. As in other Southern states, black Tennesseans are twice as likely as white Tennesseans to have been deprived of health coverage by their state’s refusal to expand Medicaid. Our state’s refusal to expand Medicaid — even a slight expansion for pregnant women - causes preventable deaths.

Email Gov. Lee today to let him know that mothers deserve access to care.

ICYMI

- **TennCare disenrollment lawsuit** - In late March, TJC filed a class action lawsuit to reinstate Tennesseans wrongfully terminated from TennCare. We couldn’t look away when thousands of Tennesseans lost the ability to get the care that they need because of TennCare’s defective process and bureaucratic errors. We are taking action on behalf of our clients and the thousands like them across the state to make sure that everyone who was wrongfully terminated in the last year gets reinstated so they have peace of mind and financial security during this time. Read more about the lawsuit here.

- **TJC’s statement against racial injustice** - As health care advocates, we see every day the impact of living with the stress and fear of systemic racism on the bodies of the clients we serve. Health disparities are the product of public policy and personal bias, of destructive leadership and collective failure. We stand with our black and brown clients, partners, volunteers, donors and colleagues in pushing for our nation to do better and to be better. Read the full statement here.

- **Pandemic EBT** - Pandemic EBT was approved in Tennessee thanks to some really good advocacy work! This extra benefit is for households with school-age children who receive free or reduced-price school meals, or who attend a Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) school that offers free school meals to all students who are eligible for P-EBT. Families will receive a total of $250.80 per child. This is determined by the daily cost of school breakfast and lunch — $5.70 per student per number of school days that have been disrupted by the pandemic, (approximately 44 days). For eligible families not on SNAP, families must apply during an established open enrollment period. Families may continue to receive free meals from schools, pick-up points, and SFSP meal sites. Participation does not disqualify eligibility for P-EBT or reduce the number of dollars you will receive. Note: P-EBT dollars are not yet available. We will alert you when the food dollars become available.

- **TJC’s updated toolkit** - The 2020 TJC Toolkit is now available! If you are unfamiliar with our Toolkit, it is a handy reference guide you can use to screen people for public health benefits including TennCare, CoverKids and Medicare Savings Programs.

- **New coverage gap estimate** - The COVID-19 pandemic intensified and presented compelling reasons to pursue Medicaid expansion in the near term rather than waiting until the 2021 legislative session. The closure of businesses and cancellation of events to slow the spread of the virus caused unemployment numbers to rise to the highest level since the Great Depression. Due to the loss of employer-sponsored coverage, it has been estimated that as many as 86,000 additional Tennesseans would fall into the coverage gap by January 2021.

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**STUDENT AMBASSADOR SPOTLIGHT**

Faith Oboh
We are so grateful for our Student Ambassadors who were working to plan an in-person event focused on teen mental health before the pandemic. Faith was the Class President of Lead Southeast High School and a community investor in the Student Ambassador's mental health project.

Faith said:

"Healthcare and health services in general should be available to the public as they deserve a way to live a healthy life. Many people choose not to go to the doctor or visit a hospital to get a check up or in an emergency out of fear. Whether they fear the cost or because of their immigration status, we shouldn’t allow that to be the case. People should be able to access healthcare without having to worry."

You can learn more about TJC’s Student Ambassador Program [here](#).

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**LOOKING FORWARD**

**Federal updates**

- **HHS Provider Relief Fund** - After a bipartisan letter from Congress raised issues with getting funding from the CARES Act to providers, HHS announced they will distribute approximately $15 billion to eligible providers that participate in state Medicaid and CHIP programs and have not received a payment from the Provider Relief Fund General Allocation, in addition to $10 billion for safety net hospitals. The initial payments only reach 62% of providers and these additional funds are meant to address
the remaining eligible providers, like pediatricians and OB-GYNs that were largely left out of the first funding distribution. You can find more information about eligibility and the application process here.

State updates

- **Legislative session reconvened on June 1.** We were monitoring two bills on the Senate side that were related to Medicaid expansion. **SB 2707** would authorize the Governor to expand Medicaid to 300,000+ uninsured Tennesseans and **SB 0378** would allow the Governor to open up coverage for uninsured Tennesseans without the legislature’s permission. Surprisingly, the bills were put on the docket, but after about 10 minutes of debate in the Senate Health and Welfare Committee, neither moved forward.
  - If you support Medicaid expansion, commit to take action with our [pledge form](#), or join us today for Tea Time with TJC (below), a time to join together and take collective action to amplify our voices.

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**JOIN US**

**Tea Time with TJC**

![Tea Time with TJC poster](image)

**CALL ON THE GOVERNOR: New moms need lifesaving access to care!**

**EVERY THURSDAY**

3 PM CT/ 4PM ET

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Hop on a Zoom call with us and other advocates to take action, find ways to amplify our collective power, and get creative about how we can make a difference. We’ll pick a weekly action, but we encourage everyone to make it their own or to bring more ideas to the group. If you can’t make the call, you can still take action and tell us about it with the hashtag #TeaTimeTJC!

This week we’ll be emailing the governor asking him to put TennCare postpartum coverage back in the budget using [this form](#).
As a reminder, the Tennessee Justice Center also helps with:

1. Enrollment onto TennCare and CoverKids
2. Service Issues
3. Redetermination Issues

If you ever encounter anyone who is having trouble getting health insurance or getting health services, please call TJC: (615) 255-0331.

If there is any information you would like us to share on your behalf, including events and resources, please reply to this email.

Sincerely,

Kinika Young  
Senior Director of Health Policy and Advocacy  
Tennessee Justice Center

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