



May 13, 2021

The Honorable Ayana Pressley
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Pressley,

On behalf of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), representing more than 133,500 family physicians, residents, and medical students across the country, I write to offer support for the COVID-19 Safe Birthing Act.

During the pandemic, pregnant people have faced a greater risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19. This compounded an already high and rising maternal mortality. In 2019, there were over 20 deaths per 100,000 live births in the U.S., which is significantly higher than the previous year.ⁱ Even more concerning, the maternal mortality rate for Black patients was 2.5 times the rate of white patients and 3.5 times the rate for Hispanic women.ⁱⁱ

Your legislation acknowledges the existing risks birthing people face and addresses concerns heightened by the ongoing pandemic by providing support and access to care for pregnant people. This bill will expand maternal telehealth for Medicaid beneficiaries and extend Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) coverage for one year postpartum. The AAFP has consistently advocated for [telehealth](#) and expansion of [Medicaid postpartum coverage](#) proposals and applauds you for including them in your legislation.

Family physicians care for patients of all ages and stages of life, including during and after pregnancy. In some circumstances, a family physician even provides critical obstetric care and delivery services. When a family physician does not help during delivery, it is crucial that continuity of care is maintained postpartum and that the primary care clinician can coordinate with the obstetrician after a patient gives birth. By expanding telehealth capabilities and insurance coverage, your legislation prioritizes birthing patients and seeks to stymie the rising maternal mortality rate in the U.S.

Thank you again for introducing this important legislation. Should you have questions, please contact Erica Cischke, Senior Manager of Legislative and Regulatory Affairs, at ecischke@aafp.org.

Sincerely,

Gary L. LeRoy, MD, FAAFP
Board Chair, American Academy of Family Physicians

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ⁱ Hoyert L., D. (2021). *Maternal Mortality Rates in the United States, 2019*. National Center for Health Statistics. <https://doi.org/10.15620/cdc:103855>

ⁱⁱ Ibid.