

Written Testimony as Prepared for Delivery in Support of **SB21-194: Maternal Health** by Erin Miller, Vice President, Health Initiatives, Colorado Children's Campaign

Senate Health and Human Services

April 14, 2021

1:30PM

[Virtual Testimony](#)

- Thank you, Chair Fields and members of the committee.
- My name is Erin Miller and I'm Vice President of Health Initiatives at the Colorado Children's Campaign, where we fight for every chance for *every* child.
- I am here in support of this bill and with deep appreciation to Senator Buckner for bringing it forward.
- The United States is the *only* developed country experiencing a sharp rise in the rate of maternal mortality, and Colorado is not immune from these national trends. Colorado's rate of maternal mortality has roughly doubled since 2008. And due to multiple layers of racism, there are striking inequities in rates of maternal death as well. Across the country, African American people are 3-4 times more likely to die than their white peers even when income-level and educational attainment are held constant.
- In Colorado, people of Native American descent are nearly 5 times more likely to die during pregnancy or the first year postpartum than non-Native people.
- I will speak to three aspects of this bill that will improve maternal health in Colorado and combat these inequities.
- **First**, this bill improves stakeholder engagement in our state's maternal mortality review process. Our Maternal Mortality Review Committee – created through the work of Senator Buckner – is a national model, and this bill will ensure that the state will be able to incorporate the input of directly impacted stakeholders, with a focus on individuals from communities of color, into that work.
- **Second**, this bill requires our public health department to make recommendations to improve the collection and public reporting of maternal health data. Maternity care is one of the few truly shoppable health services since folks often have a bit of lead time to decide where they want to have their baby – so consumers should have the data necessary to make the best decision for themselves and their family.

- **Third**, this bill requires our Medicaid department to take a new state option passed in The American Rescue Plan just last month. The option allows state Medicaid programs to extend postpartum coverage for 12 months following the end of a pregnancy while receiving our usual federal match rates. Currently, coverage ends at the end of the month 60 days after the end of a pregnancy.
- This expanded coverage will include full health benefits for Colorado moms who use Medicaid for their insurance coverage – including mental and behavioral health care and family planning services.
- It is critically important that Colorado pass this law this session so that this postpartum Medicaid extension can be implemented as soon as possible. Failing to pass this extension would mean leaving federal dollars on the table that could be used to combat one of the most critical health inequities in our state.
- We know that in Colorado, the highest number of maternal mortalities occur after 6 weeks postpartum and before 12 months postpartum and that people who use Medicaid for their health insurance are twice as likely to die as people who do not use Medicaid. For these reasons, expanding Medicaid coverage a full year postpartum is one of the legislative recommendations of our Maternal Mortality Review Committee.
- I have been in physical therapy for nearly four years to recover from an unconsented episiotomy and a 4th degree perineal tear during the birth of my first child and 12 months is the minimum amount of coverage someone should have in the postpartum period. You cannot even go to your first physical therapy appointment, for example, until 8-12 weeks after birth.
- Similarly, behavioral health issues, which are a driving cause of maternal mortality in Colorado, often take time to both appear and treat and require treatment throughout the first year postpartum.
- This policy truly has the potential to save the lives of Colorado moms – with a focus on those whose voices are often ignored and who policy often leaves behind. I urge you to vote yes and I am happy to take any questions.