



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 11, 2022

Wolf Administration, Legislators, Community Partners Affirm Importance of Reproductive Health Care for Pennsylvanians

Pittsburgh, PA – The Wolf Administration, members of the Women’s Health Caucus, and representatives from the City of Pittsburgh, Planned Parenthood, Healthy Start Pittsburgh, and other organizations affirmed that Pennsylvanians should feel safe in accessing the full scope of reproductive, perinatal, and maternal health care available to them and that supports are in place to help mothers and birthing people access necessary reproductive and perinatal care.

“With the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, we know that many people are confused and worried about getting the reproductive health care they need and deserve to keep themselves and their families healthy,” said Department of Human Services (DHS) Acting Secretary Meg Snead. “We are here to tell all Pennsylvanians: whatever stage you are at in your life, there is safe, affordable reproductive, perinatal, and postpartum health care available.”

DHS administers the federal Medicaid program in Pennsylvania. Through Medicaid and DHS’s Family Planning Services, individuals can receive free or reduced cost reproductive health care. This care may include health care provider visits, birth control, testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), screening and education for some types of cancer, and counseling from a health care provider about pregnancy, such as preparing for pregnancy, preventing unintended pregnancies, and enabling individuals to control the timing and spacing of pregnancies. No public funds are used for abortions except in cases of rape, incest, or when the life of the pregnant person is in danger.

Providing a full range of reproductive services is important because in Pennsylvania, the overall maternal mortality rate is 82 deaths per 100,000 live births. For people of color, who are already disproportionately impacted by poverty and have less access to adequate health care, the mortality rate is 163 per 100,000 live births.

“The Wolf Administration is committed to breaking down the barriers to health equity and ensuring that all Pennsylvanians have access to the appropriate reproductive and medical care regardless of race, socioeconomic background, or physical accessibility,” said Department of Health Acting Secretary and Pennsylvania Physician General Dr.

Denise Johnson. “The maternal mortality rates of people of color continue to rise and to reverse that trend we must stress that reproductive health care resources are available to keep those who are pregnant healthy and safe.”

“Forcing people to carry pregnancies to term when it's not right or not safe for them is contrary to everything we know about creating positive, healthy outcomes for families, children, and individuals,” said Representative Dan Frankel. “We will continue to fight for a commonwealth that supports and protects the public health, and that means supporting and protecting access to abortion care.”

“Preserving access to reproductive healthcare means more than just access to safe, legal abortion care. It means ensuring affordable access to quality prenatal care, expanding postnatal care to prioritize the mental and physical health of new parents, and providing paid family leave,” said Senator Lindsey Williams. “While we work to put these policies into place to protect all Pennsylvanians, I’m incredibly thankful to the clinic employees who are working non-stop to provide these essential healthcare services to those who have lost access in other states.”

“The need for our neighbors to safely access all forms of reproductive, perinatal, and maternal health care is imperative,” said Representative Sara Innamorato. “As some leaders at federal and state levels continue to restrict access to healthcare, securing reproductive freedom for Pennsylvanians will take perseverance, advocacy, and policy from our lawmakers, healthcare providers, nonprofit groups, and community members.”

“Reproductive rights are human rights. That isn’t just a slogan. The ability to access reproductive, perinatal, and maternal health care impacts not only individual physical health, but also impacts the economic health of women and birthing people, the developmental health of their children, and the overall well-being of families across our Commonwealth,” said Representative Emily Kinkead. “In a country with the worst maternal health outcomes in the developed world, I am proud that Governor Wolf recognizes that the only way to change that is to protect and expand reproductive rights and maternal health investments.”

Since taking office, Governor Tom Wolf has prioritized reproductive rights, including expanding access to health care and supportive services for parents through pregnancy and the postpartum period and giving children a strong, healthy start that can lead to continued health, well-being, and positive outcomes throughout their lives. Most recently, [Governor Wolf issued an executive order](#) that affirms the rights and safety of health care providers and out-of-state residents to access reproductive health care in the commonwealth.

“As an organization focused on public health, equity, and centering the lived experiences of marginalized people – in particular Black women – the decision to overturn Roe presents an affront to our safety, security, and bodily autonomy,” said Healthy Start Pittsburgh CEO Jada Shirriel. “We believe it is imperative for our local leaders to work diligently to ensure safe, accessible, and affordable reproductive healthcare for women and birthing people across the commonwealth.”

Among the Wolf Administration's investments in maternal-child care, the Medicaid postpartum coverage period was extended for mothers and birthing people who are eligible for the program because of their pregnancy to one year following the end of a pregnancy. Previously, people eligible for Medicaid due to their pregnancy received coverage for only 60 days after giving birth. Nationally the Medicaid program pays for one in every four births. Last year, Medicaid covered nearly 44,000 births in Pennsylvania.

"Medical care at any point prior to, during, and post-pregnancy, no matter what outcome the patient chooses, is essential and should be within reach for people in the Commonwealth," said Sydney Etheredge, President and CEO of Planned Parenthood of Western Pennsylvania. "Socioeconomic barriers, like cost, prevent people from obtaining the care they need, which is why we are encouraged by the expansion of Medicaid postpartum and look to further increases in coverage in the future."

More information on the postpartum Medicaid extension, and DHS' maternal-child health programs available across Pennsylvania is available online [here](#).

To learn more and apply for Medical Assistance and other assistance programs in Pennsylvania, visit www.dhs.pa.gov/compass.

MEDIA CONTACT: Brandon Cwalina, DHS - ra-pwdhspressoffice@pa.gov

Mark O'Neill, DOH - ra-dhpressoffice@pa.gov