FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Health bill passes with support for new mothers

*New provision aims to extend postpartum Medicaid coverage*

House Bill 1682, an omnibus healthcare bill sponsored by Representative David Wood (R – Versailles) and approved by the legislature on Friday, included a provision to improve maternal and infant health by extending Medicaid health coverage for 12 months postpartum for new moms with postpartum depression or related mental health diagnoses.

"Healthy moms equal healthy babies," said Casey Hanson, Director of Outreach and Engagement for Kids Win Missouri. "We've spent time this year engaging with public health department employees, FQHCs, pediatricians, and many other social service providers. Throughout the state, people agree we need to do more to support Missouri moms in the postpartum period."

About one in seven women experience postpartum depression in the year after giving birth. Unfortunately, while Medicaid coverage for pregnant women in Missouri ensures that many low-income women are covered during pregnancy and birth, it only provides postpartum care for women for 60 days, the minimum allowed by federal law.

“When women are insured after birth, they’re better able to address physical and emotional complications that can persist for up to a year postpartum,” said Amy Blouin, President and CEO of Missouri Budget Project. “Ensuring treatment for postpartum depression will help both moms and babies thrive. Improving access to postpartum coverage also means that Missouri can avoid more costly care down the road.”

To implement the extended coverage, Missouri must submit a waiver application to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, who oversee Medicaid federally. Missouri has already applied for a waiver from the federal government to extend coverage for substance abuse disorder treatment for 12 months past the postpartum coverage period. The federal comment period for the waiver closed at the end of March and is currently pending approval by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

“This coverage will save lives and help keep families healthy and safe. With the added stress and concerns for new mothers during the COVID-19 pandemic, this legislation is more important than ever,” said Senator Jill Schupp, sponsor of the amendment that added the coverage to HB 1682. “I am grateful to have had bipartisan support for my legislation that will offer mental health coverage for low-income moms who need it.”
Through the pandemic, organizations like Generate Health in St. Louis have been helping expectant and new mothers cope with the additional challenges that come with social distancing and less direct access to health care providers and social services. They believe this coverage marks progress toward more comprehensive maternal health coverage.

"Behavioral health concerns are a major contributor to Missouri’s high maternal mortality rate. This amendment is a significant step we can take in improving the health of women in our state,” said Kendra Copanas, Executive Director of Generate Health. “By offering information about maternal mental health to women during perinatal visits, we are breaking down the stigma and increasing access to crucial care that will improve disparities in our state.”

Legislative session ended on Friday at 6 pm, per constitutional deadline.