

FACT SHEET



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Support Prenatal Care for All Mothers

2021 Budget Amendment

Problem: Virginia's Maternal Mortality Review Team found that inadequate prenatal care was the fourth leading cause of pregnancy associated deaths of women with chronic health conditions, following tobacco use, complications from previous pregnancies, and depression. However, in cases of women without any chronic conditions, inadequate prenatal care was the leading cause of death. This data reinforces access to adequate prenatal care as a baseline indicator of maternal mortality. Furthermore, in its 2020 Scorecard, the March of Dimes graded Virginia a "C" on preterm birth rates, which are 54% higher for Black women among all other women.

While current Virginia statute recognizes the need to provide care to all pregnant women to help ensure safe births, **Virginia does not provide all pregnant women with the prenatal care upon which safe births are predicated.** A coverage gap exists in vital prenatal care services between Medicaid and FAMIS. Through Emergency Medicaid, Virginia provides for medical services to pregnant women who are eligible for care without consideration of their immigration status **only** at the time of labor.

In July 2012, both state houses further recognized the cost-savings to the Commonwealth to provide prenatal care services to pregnant women regardless of their citizenship status. But the law stopped short by excluding undocumented expectant mothers, even though their children would become U.S. citizens at birth and thus eligible for care under Virginia Medicaid/FAMIS.

Policy solution: Legislators should **amend the budget** to enact a federal provision that will allow Virginia to establish FAMIS eligibility during a woman's pregnancy, thereby extending coverage of prenatal care to all expectant mothers who meet all non-immigration eligibility criteria to receive care under Medicaid/FAMIS MOMS.

Who benefits: This budget amendment is a fundamental step to **eliminate racial disparities in maternal mortality rates.** Removing this arbitrary barrier to access to care will benefit an estimated **1,000 expectant mothers.** The Department of Medical Assistance Services estimated in 2021 budget request to the Governor that this budget amendment would net for the Commonwealth **\$2.3 million in savings and \$7.3 million in new federal funding.**