

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

July 15, 2020

Seema Verma  
Administrator  
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services  
7500 Security Boulevard  
Baltimore, MD 21244

Dear Administrator Verma,

We respectfully request that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) provide emergency guidance to states to implement State Medicaid Plan Amendments to provide reimbursement for nationally credentialed midwives during this public health crisis. Over fourteen states include credentialed midwives in their State Medicaid Plan as essential maternity care and birthing services.<sup>1</sup> Currently, three midwifery credentials have national recognition: certified nurse midwives (CNMs), certified professional midwives (CPMs) and certified midwives (CMs).

Like other health care professionals, midwives are on the front line of this global pandemic and have seen an increase in demand for their services. Given many states' stay-at-home orders and women's fears of exposing themselves and their newborns to COVID-19 in hospitals, as well as restrictions on care and companions in hospital maternity units, more healthy pregnant women are forgoing standard hospital births and are seeking home and birth center births instead.<sup>2</sup> All three of the above-mentioned types of midwives practice in home and birth center settings.

While the pandemic has underscored the disproportionate deaths of African Americans and Native Americans from COVID-19, it has also highlighted the disparities throughout our entire health system including in maternal health where black women experience significantly higher maternal mortality rates than non-Hispanic white women. African American and Native American women are on average three to four times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than white women, with a rate as high as five times for women over thirty.<sup>3</sup>

Combating this inequality requires us to use all tools at our disposal, including the Medicaid program. With over 1.5 million women insured by Medicaid giving birth each year, the program

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<sup>1</sup> <https://mana.org/about-midwives/state-by-state>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/health/2020/04/04/coronavirus-pregnancy-home-births-midwives-pandemic/5100678002/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.rollcall.com/2020/05/14/covid-19-amplifies-racial-disparities-in-maternal-health/>

is well placed to help improve maternal care of all pregnant women, including pregnant women of color.<sup>4</sup>

More and more states are recognizing the role that midwives can play in ensuring access to quality and culturally competent maternal care that is respectful and trusted to help reduce disparities and save lives. The relationship-based midwifery model of care is connected to a significant reduction in C-sections, lower instances of low-birth-weight babies and preterm births, high rates of breastfeeding and other positive health benefits.<sup>5</sup>

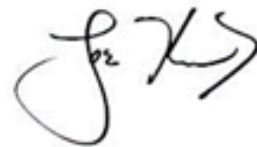
Thorough State Medicaid Plan reimbursement guidance from your agency will help states to properly encourage and recruit credentialed midwives to provide care to those that need it most, particularly women of color.<sup>6</sup>

It is a policy priority to ensure that more and more childbearing women have access to nationally credential midwives and their proven high-value care during pregnancy, around the time of birth and in the postpartum period. States need to be provided proper Medicaid guidance on how to ensure that they are adequately reimbursed as they fulfill their responsibilities. Thank you again for your consideration of this request. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Gwen S. Moore  
Member of Congress



Joseph P. Kennedy, III  
Member of Congress

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/health/2020/04/04/coronavirus-pregnancy-home-births-midwives-pandemic/5100678002/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2019/05/02/469186/eliminating-racial-disparities-maternal-infant-mortality/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21328263/>

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