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GOVERNOR, FIRST LADY WITH FEDERAL PARTNERS SAVE NJ LIVES: CHSofNJ Supports and Educates Women who will be Helped

Trenton, NJ (November 12, 2021)

CHSofNJ is proud of New Jersey for leading the nation and the region by extending postpartum health coverage under Medicaid for up to 1 year. Approximately 8,700 NJ postpartum women statewide will receive access to health coverage. Governor Phil Murphy, First Lady Tammy Murphy, legislators and federal partners at the US Department of Health and Human Services are increasing birth and health equity for many low-income women and women of color that CHSofNJ serves through prenatal health education, WIC and Head Start. CHSofNJ CEO Donna Pressma said, “It has been our mission for over 120 years to save children’s lives and build healthy families; and this move by New Jersey will support our mission.”

CHSofNJ is pleased to share the following outcomes of our prenatal health education program for low-income women and women of color. Prenatal health education provides group education and support during pregnancy and then continues support following delivery including breastfeeding education; infant massage to promote parent/infant bonding and screenings for postpartum depression.

From October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2021, the CHSofNJ prenatal health education programs have served 65 women, supporting highly positive birth outcomes even in the challenging circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- 100% Babies born without a disability
- 95% Prenatal appointments kept by mothers
- 93% Full birthweight babies (over 5 lbs. 8 oz.)
- 93% Mothers initiated breastfeeding
- 92% Full-term births (after 37 weeks gestation)
- 90% Babies not in NICU

Such positive outcomes will also be supported by New Jersey’s extension from 60 days to 365 days postpartum Medicaid coverage. This 1-year of coverage is critical because more than half of pregnancy-related deaths occur after delivery, according to the Commonwealth Fund, which explains that, “40 percent occur 1 to 42 days postpartum and 11.7 percent from 43 to 365 days postpartum nationally, with even higher rates in some states.” But more than half of pregnancy-related mortality overall and during the postpartum period is considered preventable; and could be responded to through better health insurance coverage in the one year after birth. US Congresswoman Bonnie Watson-Coleman, who represents Trenton in Washington DC, has worked hard on this issue: “Too many women are dying from preventable conditions and complications due to labor and delivery. In many instances these threats are compounded by

race and income gaps.” Providing continued Medicaid coverage helps ensure access to the ongoing care people need during the postpartum period, especially in the pandemic. The continuity of coverage will help postpartum people manage chronic conditions like hypertension and diabetes, and provide access to mental health care services.

As the journal *Health Affairs* writes, “postpartum care is often absent or incomplete, with particularly low rates among Black and Brown mothers. In 2018, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists issued guidelines recommending extending postpartum care into the “fourth trimester” and key postpartum services, including management of chronic conditions, breastfeeding support, screening for mental health disorders, and contraception planning.” NJ Assemblywoman Verlina Reynold-Jackson who represents Trenton explained this situation well: “Pregnancy’s impact on a person’s health doesn’t always end once their baby is brought into the world. From mental health issues to chronic pain, new parents often need follow-up care from trained healthcare professionals to achieve a full recovery. Now that our state’s Medicaid program will cover post-partum care for an entire year after a child is born, more New Jerseyans will be able to receive the care they both need and deserve.”

CHSofNJ applauds this move supported by Governor Murphy, the First Lady, NJ legislators and the federal Administration as their work aligns with the mission of CHSofNJ – to save children’s lives and build healthy families. We work to improve the health of moms and babies every day. Through our continuum of programs, CHSofNJ annually serves 60-90 women in prenatal health education and support; over 400 women, children, and families in Head Start services in Trenton; and over 7,000 women, children and families in WIC nutrition services in Mercer County.

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About The Children’s Home Society of New Jersey

The Children’s Home Society of New Jersey is a nonprofit child and family serving agency whose mission is to save children’s lives and build healthy families. Founded in 1894, the agency protects abused or neglected infants and at-risk children by insuring stable, permanent, and loving homes for each and every child it serves. All services are confidential and most are free. For more information, visit our website at chsfnj.org.