



An Act Increasing Access to Maternal Postpartum Home Visiting Services (HB.985/SB.762)

Lead Sponsors: Rep. Marjorie Decker, Rep. Chynah Tyler and Sen. Joan Lovely

Why is this legislation needed?

- [More than half](#) of pregnancy-related deaths occur in the 12-month postpartum period. For every person who dies from pregnancy-related causes, [another 70](#) suffer from severe physical illness or disability, including behavioral health conditions.
- Postpartum care addresses a range of important health needs, including recovery from pregnancy-related complications, management of chronic health conditions and access to family planning and mental health services.
- In Massachusetts, about [10 percent](#) of individuals who have given birth do not attend a postpartum health care visit. [Barriers](#) to accessing care include lack of insurance, time constraints, uncoordinated care and transportation challenges.
- Maternal and early childhood home visiting programs can [provide critical supports](#) for birthing people and their families during the postpartum period.
- *Welcome Family*, a postpartum home visiting program administered by the Department of Public Health (DPH), is available to all caregivers with newborns in Boston, Lowell, Fall River, Holyoke and Springfield. Funding limitations have prevented statewide expansion. The program provides a one-time nurse home visit, referrals and a follow-up visit. Program participants are more likely to be referred to Early Intervention and other evidence-based home visiting programs, and less likely to use emergency medical care for child injuries 1-2 years after birth.

Why is this a health equity issue?

- Black and Indigenous birthing people are [two to three times](#) more likely than white individuals to die or experience serious illness and injury due to pregnancy-related causes.
- Black birthing people have the [highest risk](#) of developing chronic diabetes after having gestational diabetes, yet have lower rates of postpartum diabetes screening.
- Home visiting programs help support the most underserved families. For example, *Welcome Family* serves a higher risk population (younger, publicly insured, non-U.S. born, non-English primary language, WIC participants) compared to the total eligible population.

What does this legislation do?

Expands access to universal postpartum home visiting services:

- Codifies and expands statewide the DPH universal postpartum home visiting program.
- Requires MassHealth and private insurance to cover services provided by the DPH postpartum home visiting program.

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