

news release

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MARCH OF DIMES HAILS THE INTRODUCTION OF THE HEALTHY MATERNITY AND OBSTETRIC MEDICINE ACT

Bill would allow pregnant women to enroll in coverage outside open enrollment periods

WASHINGTON, June 23, 2015 — The March of Dimes, the nation’s leading advocacy organization for maternal and child health, today hailed the introduction of the Healthy Maternity and Obstetric Medicine Act (Healthy MOM Act), a bill to create a special health insurance enrollment period for pregnant women. This legislation is authored by Representative Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-NJ) and supported by numerous cosponsors and organizations.

“Women need to have health insurance when they are pregnant,” stated March of Dimes President Dr. Jennifer L. Howse. “It’s very difficult for women to obtain the prenatal care and other services necessary for a healthy pregnancy and baby without insurance. The March of Dimes is grateful to Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman and her colleagues for championing this important measure for maternal and child health.”

Under current law, women whose income is above Medicaid eligibility levels are able to enroll in coverage or change plans through their states’ marketplaces only during the annual open enrollment period. If a woman discovers she is pregnant outside the open enrollment period, she may be unable to obtain affordable coverage with appropriate benefits for most or all of her pregnancy. The Healthy MOM Act seeks to address this gap by designating pregnancy as a Qualifying Life Event, which will trigger a special enrollment period for women to enroll in coverage.

Prenatal care typically includes screening and treatment for high blood pressure, gestational diabetes, and numerous other medical conditions that can impact pregnancy health and birth outcomes. Prenatal care also includes identification of and interventions for behavioral risk factors associated with poor birth outcomes, such as tobacco use or substance abuse. Without coverage and appropriate benefits, women may be unable to access these services to have the healthiest possible pregnancy and birth.

Supporting healthy pregnancies not only leads to better birth outcomes but can also generate health care savings. Research commissioned by the March of Dimes has shown that average expenditures for premature/low birthweight (LBW) infants were more than 10 times as high as uncomplicated newborns. Newborns with other selected complications, including congenital defects and co-morbidities associated with prematurity or LBW, were more than twice as costly as newborns without complications.

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About the March of Dimes

The March of Dimes is a national voluntary health agency whose volunteers and staff work to improve the health of

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infants and children by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality. Founded in 1938, the March of Dimes funds programs of research, community services, education and advocacy. For the latest resources and information, visit marchofdimes.org or nacersano.org. Find us on [Facebook](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#).