

An Act Increasing Access to Maternal Postpartum Home Visiting Services (HD.4006/SD.1160)

Lead Sponsors: Rep. Marjorie Decker 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 range of important health needs, including recovery from childbirth and pregnancy 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. People with limited resources have even lower rates of postpartum visits, which contribute to considerable racial and ethnic disparities. [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 and help improve maternal and child health outcomes, prevent child abuse and neglect, support positive parenting and promote child development.
- [Welcome Family](#) is a voluntary “light touch” universal postpartum home visiting program administered by the Department of Public Health (DPH) in Boston, Lowell, Fall River, Holyoke and Springfield. Funding limitations have prevented statewide expansion. The program provides a one-time nurse home visit to caregivers with newborns, referrals to additional resources, and a follow up visit. Program participants were more likely to be referred to Early Intervention and longer-term home visiting programs, and children were less likely to use emergency medical care for injuries 1-2 years after birth.

Why is this a health equity issue?

- People of Color are more likely than white individuals to die or experience serious illness and injury due to pregnancy-related causes. Black and Indigenous birthing people have pregnancy-related mortality rates [two to three times](#) higher than white birthing individuals.
- 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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