

DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER

April 12, 2022

The Hon. Mark Pearson, Chair
And Members of the House HHS Committee
Legislative Office Building
Concord, NH 03301

Re: SB 407 (Expanding Postpartum Coverage Under Medicaid)

Dear Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee:

As the Director of the Office of Public Policy of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Manchester, and on behalf of Bishop Peter Libasci, I write to respectfully register our **support for SB 407**. I would note that the policy of expanding postpartum Medicaid benefits to 12 months is supported by Catholic Bishops around the country.

When the Diocese of Manchester reviews a piece of legislation, the inquiry begins with a look at how the bill affects human dignity and the common good, the two principles which are at the heart of Catholic Social Teaching and which, of course, also are the foundation stones of the body politic established by the state and federal constitutions. We think that SB 407 unquestionably advances those principles.

Anyone who has been a parent or who simply knows a new mother can testify to the challenges of the first year of motherhood, and those challenges obviously are all the greater for mothers who are in financial need. SB 407 is an important way to support these new mothers (and indirectly their babies) at an especially critical juncture in their lives. As I think the proponents of SB 407 have shown, the extending of postpartum Medicaid coverage will provide critical public health benefits to this cohort of new mothers, especially with respect to areas like behavioral health and substance misuse.

As you know, a similar bill, HB 1536, was laid on the table in the House earlier this session. Nevertheless, I would urge the House to seize the opportunity to pass this initiative now so that mothers who are in need of the services that this bill would enable can receive them without delay. Moreover, since the federal money for this program is only available for a finite period, each day lost translates into fewer federal funds that can be utilized and fewer mothers than can be aided. We should also remember that each mother whose health and well-being can be impacted by this measure translates into at least one more child with the prospects of a better future than would otherwise be the case.

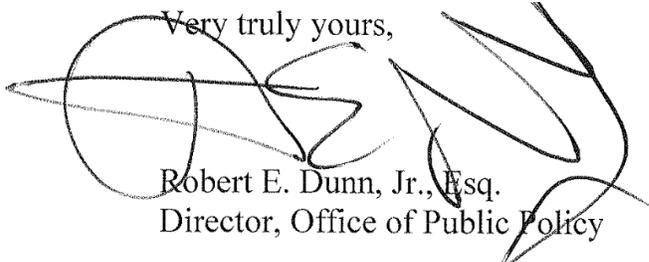
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I recognize that concerns were expressed about the long-term financial commitment that the State of New Hampshire might need to make on this after the federal funds expire in five years. If I might offer a suggestion regarding how this concern can be addressed, perhaps a prospective repeal provision could be inserted into the bill which would sunset the law once the federal funding expires. That would allow this legislature to ensure that no state commitment will extend beyond that point unless a future legislature assesses the situation and decides that it is beneficial to keep the program going, based on the circumstances then at hand.

The family is the keystone of our society. I think there are few ways we can better serve the common good than by prioritizing the needs of mothers and their babies, and so I respectfully ask that you recommend ought to pass on SB 407.

Thank you for your kind consideration of our views.

Very truly yours,



Robert E. Dunn, Jr., Esq.
Director, Office of Public Policy