



Date: February 17, 2025

To: Chair Lyons and members of the Senate Health and Welfare Committee

From: Tina Zuk, Government Relations Director, American Heart Association

Re: S.14 - Expanding Income Eligibility for Pregnant Women in Dr. Dynasaur

On behalf of the American Heart Association, I urge you to take up and support S.14 to expand income eligibility for coverage under Dr. Dynasaur to pregnant women up to 312% of the federal poverty level (FPL.)

While Vermont's coverage of up to 213% FPL certainly exceeds other states, there are currently nine other states with income eligibility greater than 250% for this population. There is great need given cardiovascular disease's impact on women noted below and the benefits are well worth it.

- As of 2020, heart disease accounts for 1 in 5 deaths among women. ([latest data from CDC](#))
- US maternal mortality rates have actually more than doubled since 1999. ([Study from JAMA](#))

This move would also be a logical next step following Vermont's recent action to extend postpartum coverage in Medicaid to a full twelve months. The core reasons supporting postpartum coverage also strongly apply here:

Improving health outcomes: Ensuring pregnant people have comprehensive coverage is critical for the health of both moms and babies. Access to care before, during, and after pregnancy is linked to lower maternal and infant mortality rates—especially for Black women and babies (and other historically marginalized communities)—and helps reduce health disparities across all racial and ethnic groups.

Financial protection: Expanding Medicaid eligibility would help women who may currently only qualify for marketplace plans by lowering their out-of-pocket costs. Medicaid's lower cost-sharing provides better financial protection, making essential health care and treatments more accessible during a time when finances can be tight. This is especially important for pregnant people who may have CVD or other comorbidities.

Optimizing access to care: By increasing eligibility, states can ensure that more new mothers and their children get the care they need during this critical time for maternal health and early childhood development.