



Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development
Office of Domestic Social Development

PREGNANT WOMEN SUPPORT ACT

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ISSUE

Tragically, each year over one million unborn children never see the day of their birth. Too many women wrongly believe abortion is their only alternative. Studies have shown that for approximately three out of four women who have an abortion, the belief that they cannot afford a child was one of the key reasons. Many pregnant women, particularly young women, need better access to information and resources so they may be encouraged to choose life and have a healthy pregnancy and healthy baby.

An important step toward supporting pregnant women is to help them overcome poverty. The poverty rate for people (parent, children, etc.) living in households headed by a single parent is thirty percent compared to twelve percent of the general population in the United States.

According to the U.S. Census, a woman with a college degree has a median annual income (\$31,309) double that of a woman with only a high school diploma. Access to information and resources while attending school or working, including nutrition assistance and child care, are needed to help women overcome poverty.

A lack of access to health care and health insurance are other barriers. For example, many health insurers consider pregnancy a pre-existing condition and will deny coverage for prenatal care for new enrollees. Inadequate medical care or large medical bills can push someone living just above poverty into poverty. Women lacking prenatal care are at much higher risk of having a baby with low birth weight, developmental delays or other medical problems. Access to affordable and quality health care is essential for all pregnant women and their children.

BACKGROUND

The Pregnant Women Support Act (H.R. 2035 and S. 1032) is a common-sense solution that people on all sides of the political debate can support. All of us should prevent women from being pressured toward abortion in this country and to offer concrete help to mothers and young children. The Pregnant Women Support Act would provide information and resources to help pregnant women continue their pregnancy and parent a new child. The bill would also fund the collection and reporting of abortion surveillance data.

The Pregnant Women Support Act will support women by:

- Establishing a toll-free number to direct women to places that will provide support during and following their pregnancy;
- Funding collection of accurate data on abortion;
- Providing child care to low income and student parents;
- Providing parenting education in maternity group homes and pregnancy centers;
- Improving adoption assistance;

- Ensuring that pregnant women are not denied health care by insurance companies and that coverage is continued for newborns;
- Codifying the regulation that extends coverage under the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) to low-income pregnant women and unborn children;
- Improving services for pregnant women who are victims of domestic violence;
- Increasing funding for the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program;
- Providing grants to institutions of higher education to fund pregnant and parenting student services;
- Providing new mothers with free home visits by registered nurses.

USCCB POSITION

Catholic teaching affirms the right to life for every person- born and unborn- and insists every life is sacred and has inherent dignity. The Bishops' Conference consistently and unequivocally supports laws and programs that encourage childbirth and adoption over abortion and that work to address poverty, provide health care, and offer other assistance to pregnant women, children, and families.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has worked closely with lawmakers to seek passage of the Pregnant Women Support Act. The Bishops' Conference has said "By providing practical resources and information, the bill will empower pregnant women to make healthy choices for themselves and their children, born and unborn...The Pregnant Women's Support Act is truly a common-ground initiative to reduce the number of abortions in the United States...Everyone can agree that no woman should choose abortion under financial duress or because she is threatened by domestic violence during her pregnancy."

ACTION

Contact your Representative and Senators and urge them to co-sponsor the Pregnant Women Support Act (H.R. 2035 or S. 1032). All member of Congress should hear from their constituents that reducing the number of abortions in the United States and supporting vulnerable mothers and their children should be a national priority.

For more information:

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