

# **Birth Access Benefitting Improved Essential Facility Services (BABIES) Act**

Senators Ben Ray Luján (D-NM)

**The BABIES Act addresses the maternal and infant mortality crisis in the United States by creating a federally funded Birth and Women's Health Center demonstration program.**

## **Birth Centers**

A birth center is a freestanding health care facility for childbirth where care is provided through the midwifery model. Birth centers offer high-quality health care for mothers and babies by offering risk-appropriate care, reducing caesareans and other poor outcomes in a cost-effective way.

In 2012, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI) began studying innovative prenatal care models that showed promise of reducing preterm birth and improving outcomes and satisfaction among mothers while reducing costs. This study resulted in the [Strong Start for Mothers and Newborns Initiative](#), a joint effort between Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), and the Administration on Children and Families (ACF). The Strong Start for Mothers and Newborns study, which took place from 2013 to 2017, found that birth centers, a midwifery model of care, resulted in:

- lower rates of preterm birth and low birthweight;
- lower rates of C-section which is associated with improved maternal and infant outcomes; and
- cost savings of \$2,000 per mother-infant pair.

**The study demonstrated that birth center care has a larger potential impact on the reduction of preterm birth risk than any other recent medical or public health intervention.**

## **BABIES Act**

The BABIES Act uses the lessons learned from the Strong Start Program to build on the birth center model by creating a demonstration program that allows up to six states to participate through their Medicaid Programs for four years. Specifically, this bill requires the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to establish a Medicaid demonstration program to improve freestanding birth center services for women with low-risk pregnancies. This legislation requires CMS to:

1. publish criteria for freestanding birth centers to participate in the program, including specified accreditation, licensure, and service requirements;
2. publish guidance for states to establish prospective payment systems under Medicaid for program participants; and
3. award planning grants for states to develop program proposals.

## **Supporting Organizations**

American College of Nurse Midwives, National Association of Certified Professional Midwives, American Association of Birth Centers, American Academy of Nursing, American Medical Student Association, Ancient Song Doula Services, Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs, Ariadne Labs, Black Mamas Matter Alliance, Commission for the Accreditation of Birth Centers, DONA International, Every Mother Counts, Futures Without Violence, Improving Birth, Jewish Healthcare Foundation, Lamaze International, March for Moms, Midwives Alliance of North America, Mom Congress, Moms Rising, National Health Law Program, National Partnership for Women & Families, National Rural Health Association, Our Bodies Ourselves, Sisters in Birth, Women and Girls Foundation, Women's Law Project and VBAC Facts

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