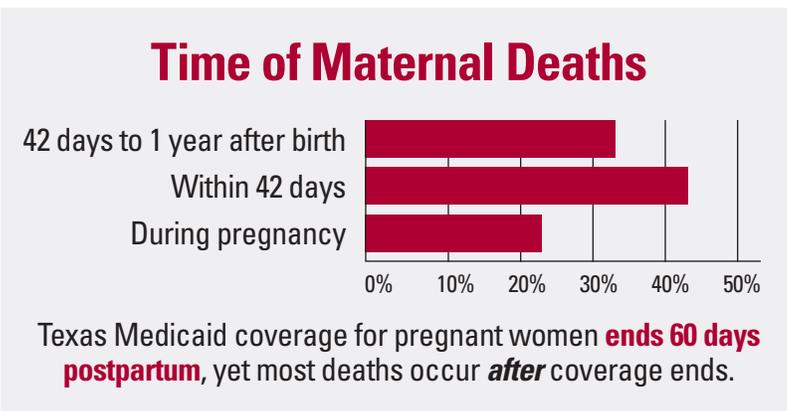


# Improve Health for Mothers and Babies

Texas must improve health care coverage, access, and supportive social services to ensure healthy outcomes for moms and their babies. **The March of Dimes reported in 2022 that Texas women, particularly rural ones, were more likely to live in maternity care deserts – communities with high rates of uninsured women and/or limited access to obstetrical care physicians and hospitals (see map). Moreover, the report graded Texas D-** because of its stagnant or declining progress on important maternal and infant health clinical indicators like prenatal care, preterm births, and infant mortality. Coverage and access to care – or lack thereof – are closely associated with each measure.

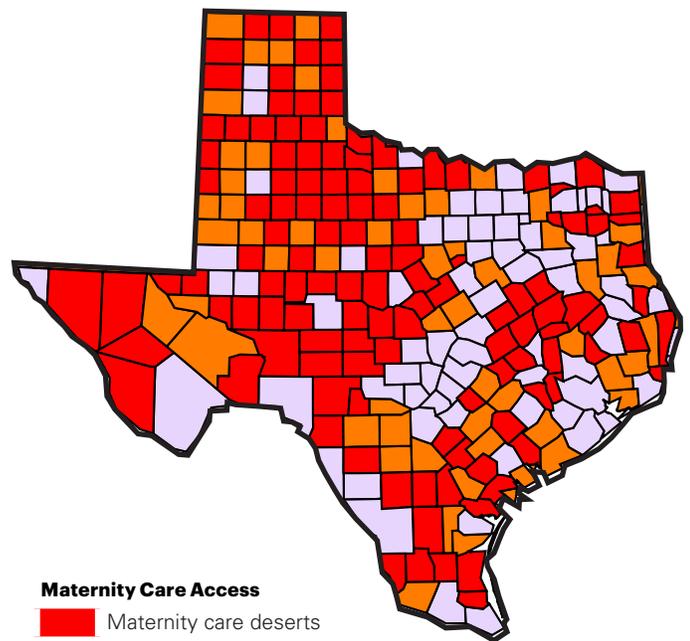
On another vital indicator – maternal mortality – Texas’ rate is higher than the national average, with Black mothers more likely to die postpartum. While many factors contribute to maternal deaths, nearly nine in 10 are preventable. A key contributor is the lack of health insurance – and 25% of Texas women aged 18-44 are uninsured. Without coverage, many women delay or forgo care, often with tragic results. Insured women are more likely to receive timely and regular health services throughout their reproductive life span. For every maternal death, 50-100 women suffer a severe complication, known as maternal morbidity.



## Maternal health calls for a many-pronged strategy

Texas has established noteworthy initiatives to improve maternal and child health like a statewide Perinatal Quality Collaborative; a Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee to evaluate the root causes of maternal deaths; and inpatient maternity safety “bundles” to help hospitals and medical staffs reduce preventable maternal deaths and complications, such as hemorrhage. However, more work is needed to protect the health of moms and their newborn babies.

A multipronged strategy is needed to make meaningful gains in maternal health, which is why TMA urges lawmakers to enact a package of policy measures to improve access to timely, high-quality health care prenatally through a child’s third birthday – and beyond.



Source: 2022 March of Dimes Maternity Care Report

## TMA’s Legislative Recommendations

- Extend Medicaid postpartum coverage to one full year, mirroring Florida and 26 other states.
- Provide comprehensive health care coverage before pregnancy, not just after.
- Increase funding for Healthy Texas Women, the Family Planning Program, and the Breast and Cervical Cancer Program.
- Ensure timely access to early prenatal and newborn services by streamlining Medicaid enrollment.
- Increase perinatal-related intervention for mental health and substance use, both of which are leading causes of maternal death and morbidity.
- Fund a perinatal data system to help Texas develop more informed interventions to improve quality of care for mothers and babies.
- Fund perinatal and pediatric palliative and hospice care to better support families facing a terminal diagnosis.



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