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Maternity Ward Closures in Southern California

Senate Bill 1300

Requires hospitals to notify county governments 120 days before closing a L&D unit, instead of 90 days.

March of Dimes Report

Over 146,000 babies born in maternity care deserts, with 300,000 more in areas with limited access, affecting 2.2 million women of childbearing age.

Transforming Maternal Health (TMaH) Model

Launched in California on January 1, 2025. Aims to reduce disparities and improve care for Medicaid and CHIP enrollees.

Since 2012, over 50 hospitals in California, 17 in LA alone, have closed their maternity wards. More than half of these took place in 2021. These closures have hit low-income, Latino, and underserved communities the most.

Key drivers of these closures include:

Declining birth rates

High operational and staffing costs

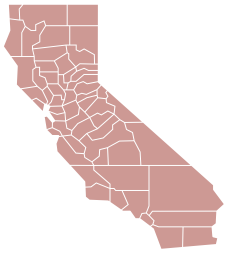
Physician and nurse shortages

Hospital consolidation and financial instability

Policy and Access Issues:

Reduced access to care in rural and low-income areas

More counties now lack hospitals with obstetrics or birth centers



Closures have led to longer travel times for pregnant individuals seeking care and have overwhelmed obstetrics departments in neighboring hospitals. These closures have led to the increase in maternal mortality and complications.

Policies Impacting Maternal Health

Enforcing the Hyde Amendment

The Hyde Amendment prohibits the use of federal funds to pay for abortions except in cases of rape, incest, or when the life of the pregnant person is at risk. It primarily affects people on Medicaid and other federally funded health programs, limiting access to abortion for low-income individuals. As of April 2025, the Hyde Amendment remains in effect.

Mamas First Act – Not yet passed, in committee referral stage.

The Mamas First Act is a proposal aimed at addressing the maternal mortality crisis by expanding Medicaid to cover doula, midwifery, and tribal midwifery care. It aims to improve maternal health outcomes, mainly for Black and Indigenous communities. The goal is to increase access to culturally competent care.

California SB 626 – Scheduled for Hearing April 30, 2025

Improved maternal care by asking healthcare providers to screen, diagnose, and treat perinatal patients based on established medical guidelines.

The California Justice and Equity in Maternity Care Act

Increases access to perinatal providers by eliminating the physician supervision requirement for nurse-midwives.

Universal Healthcare in California

California now offers universal Medi-Cal coverage to all income-eligible pregnant people, regardless of immigration status, for throughout pregnancy and for up to 1-year postpartum.

Strong Start and Beyond Initiative

Led by California's Surgeon General in 2024. Improve reproductive and maternal health by reducing the state's maternal mortality rate by 50% through community engagement and partnerships .

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