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## New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute Statement of Support Assembly Bill 4530

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Thank you for considering our statement of support for the committee's consideration of A.4530. This bill would create a statewide, free, home-visit from a licensed health care provider for every new mother and their infant(s) within 7 days of discharge, unless they decline the service.

The mission of the Quality Institute is to improve the safety, quality, and affordability of health care for everyone. Maternal health is a focus area for the Quality Institute. We lead and participate in various National and state-based initiatives to improve quality, safety, and equity of maternal child health.

Over the past few years, New Jersey has actively pursued a multi-pronged approach to address both the crisis of Black Maternal Morbidity and Mortality as well as improving the quality of perinatal care throughout the state. Steps to date include Medicaid coverage of community doulas and centering programs, increased hospital safety and quality protocols and reporting, and changes to how care is reimbursed such as an end to payment for early elective deliveries. Most of these changes, however, focus almost entirely on the prenatal and birthing periods, leaving individuals vulnerable during the post-partum and newborn period – known as “the fourth trimester.” Research shows that in the fourth trimester mother and baby are both at high risk of physical and mental health complications and could benefit from greater support and care. This fourth trimester period presents considerable challenges, such as postpartum depression, fatigue, lack of sleep, pain, breastfeeding difficulties, lack of sexual desire, and urinary incontinence. According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), nearly 70% of women report at least one physical health concern during the first 12 months postpartum. A specially trained nurse or other licensed health care provider, who understands the physical and mental health challenges of the post-partum period, could recognize warning signs of potential medical complications, and connect the family to the appropriate community-based services.

Certain nurse home visiting programs have reported that in their programs:

- Mothers are 28% less likely to report anxiety symptoms.
- Mothers report significantly more positive parenting behaviors.
- Mothers express increased sensitivity to, and acceptance of, their infants.
- Home environments are improved with an increase in safety and the number of learning materials.
- Additionally, studies show the program reduces emergency health care costs and child abuse investigations across the first 60 months of life.

For these reasons, we support A.4530. We thank the Committee for its consideration of our statement. We look forward to continued opportunities to work with the State to ensure that New Jersey is the healthiest place to give birth. We would be happy to share additional resources and expertise with any of the committee members.