



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on April 6, 2021

New Utah Law Requires Dads to Pay Half of Pregnancy Costs

Pro-life advocates are praising a new Utah law as a positive step in the right direction as it will require biological fathers to pay financial support to cover half the costs related to pregnancy. The law makes Utah the first state to mandate prenatal child support, according to the state's Planned Parenthood.

[H.B. 113](#), Utah Child Support Act, requires "a biological father to pay 50 percent of a mother's insurance premiums while she is pregnant; and pregnancy-related medical costs, including the hospital birth of the child, that are not paid by another person."



Photo: damircudic / iStock / Getty Images Plus

Though the bill was signed into law by Republican Governor Spencer Cox last month, it only gained national attention in this week's news cycle after Monday's report in The Associated Press. If paternity status has not been established, the father is not required to pay any support until after paternity is confirmed, the Daily Wire reports.

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The bill also exempts the father from paying for an abortion if he did not consent to one, with exceptions for abortions that would save the life of the mother or if the pregnancy was conceived in rape or incest.

The bill's sponsor, Republican Representative Brady Brammer, said his bill will help to increase "responsibility for men in the bringing of life into the world."

Brammer said the bill was proof that not all pro-life legislation was "anti-abortion." "We want to help people and actually be pro-life in how we do it as opposed to anti-abortion," Brammer (R) said. "One of the ways to help with that was to help the burden of pregnancy be decreased."

Other supporters of the bill believe the new responsibility it places on biological fathers may help them to understand and appreciate the significance of their position and make them more invested in the pregnancy. Republican Senator Dan McCay [said](#) the bill is an effort "to try and bring some equity to the funding of pregnancies and share in that burden and [to recognize] the important role that the mother and the father play in the pregnancy."

Merrilee Boyack, chairman of the Abortion-Free Utah coalition, believes the legislation will reduce the number of abortions by easing some of the financial burdens related to pregnancy. "Anything we can do to support women in these circumstances will help them be able to give birth to their babies, feel good about that choice and feel supported along the way," Boyack said.

YWCA Utah countered this argument by stating the measure "does not account for relationship dynamics that could be strained, distant, or even dangerous for pregnant women."



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Gabriella Archuleta, a public policy analyst with YWCA Utah, opined, “On the surface of it, it sounds like a good idea. But what we’re here to do is look at some of the nuances and how it impacts women, and I don’t think those nuances were really explored to the extent that they should have been.”

But the measure does not force women to obtain half the costs of the pregnancy from the biological fathers. It merely gives them the option to do so. Planned Parenthood spokeswoman Katrina Barker said she supports more financial support for women during pregnancy, NBC News reports, but asserts there were “better” ways to address this, like by expanding Medicaid and providing paid parental leave.

In other words, it would be better if the government paid for it rather than the father. Sadly, it is this very mentality that helped contribute to the rise of fatherless households, the Institute for Family Studies reports:

One contributor to family breakdown ... may have been welfare expansion. Cash welfare in meager form existed since 1935, and some welfare expansion took place during the Kennedy administration. But under Johnson’s Great Society, which began in 1964, benefits became substantially more generous and came under greater control of the federal government.

In the words of Harvard’s [Paul Peterson](#), “some programs actively discouraged marriage,” because “welfare assistance went to mothers so long as no male was boarding in the household.... Marriage to an employed male, even one earning the minimum wage, placed at risk a mother’s economic well-being.” Infamous “man in the house” rules meant that welfare workers would randomly appear in homes to check and see if the mother was accurately reporting her family-status....

... That may be a reason why, in 1964, [only 7%](#) of American children were born out of wedlock, compared to [40% today](#). As Jason Riley [has noted](#), “the government paid mothers to keep fathers out of the home — and paid them well.”

Barker also said she does not believe the measure will reduce the number of abortions because the cost of having a baby is minimal compared to the cost of raising a baby. “In the grand scheme of things, having a child and raising them to adulthood is going to be a lot more money,” Barker said.

But there are a number of resources available to women struggling to raise children. H.B. 113 would help new mothers by reducing their medical debt related to pregnancy expenses.

Liesa Stockdale, director of Utah’s Office of Recovery Services, says the state already allows mothers the option to seek financial support for birth-related expenses, though few do. This measure will now allow women to also seek pregnancy-related expenses through the legal system. “I don’t know how often it will be used,” Stockdale said. “That’s yet to be seen how often parents will choose to pursue these costs. But certainly if they do, we’re here to collect.”



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