

Building NESTs for New Moms: Newborn Equity Support Transfers

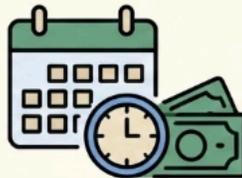
Support HB 5238 / SB 3756

Childbirth is one of the most economically precarious moments in a person's life, at perhaps the moment of greatest need. That's why HB 5238 / SB 3756 creates the Newborn Equity Support Transfer (NEST) program. It would give expectant mothers much-needed prenatal and postpartum financial support.

NEST is direct cash at the moment families face the biggest health risks amidst an affordability crisis.



The Nest offers expectant moms a **\$1,500**, prenatal lump-sum payment



Followed by **\$500 a month** for the first six months of the baby's life



This could be made accessible to **every mother who gives birth on Medicaid** – about 40% of all births

From MI to IL: Cash to Babies Saves Lives & Helps Children Grow

In 2024, Michigan launched a program similar to NEST in Flint and found dramatic results. [Studies show](#) the program:

- Reduced preterm births by 18%;
- Low weight births by 27%;
- Saw a combined 29% reduction in Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) admissions.

The program was so successful that Michigan recently expanded it statewide. Direct cash transfers allow expectant mothers to solve problems with flexibility.

Families in Flint saw:

- A **9.1% increase in prenatal care**;
- **14% reduction in postpartum depression**; and
- **32% reduction in the maltreatment allegation rate** while control-group cities saw an increase.
- **Most impressively, the program saw a 91% reduction in evictions, keeping mothers in their nest at the most important time of a baby's life.**

Statewide Impact, Statewide Results

Critically, NEST impacts are most valuable where maternal care deserts exist. [March of Dimes](#) found severe maternal care deserts in over a third of all counties in downstate Illinois.

The benefits of NEST go beyond the immediate family. By targeting nearly half of all births in Illinois via Medicaid, reductions in emergency care for adverse outcomes can save over \$140 million in care associated with preterm and low-weight births. [National research](#) suggests full-term, normal-weight births can cost just over \$6,300, while a preterm baby can cost about \$76,000 and a low-weight baby can cost over \$100,000 per birth. Therefore, NEST represents an opportunity to reduce strain on hospitals and make State resources more efficient.

By investing in families when it matters most, building NESTs for new moms ensures Illinois children get the strongest possible start, and helps Illinois to be the best place to raise a family.



**Cash Makes
Healthy Moms &
Healthy Babies**



For more information, contact Erion Malasi, Director of Policy and Research with Economic Security-Illinois Action.
erion@economicsecurity.us