

35th National Black Nurses Day on Capitol Hill Health Equity, Reckoning & Wellness: NBNA's Renewed Call to Action

Time to Reckon with Black Maternal Health

The National Black Nurses Association (NBNA) calls on the 118th Congress to address maternal and infant mortality as an ongoing public health crisis. NBNA supports comprehensive efforts to reduce maternal and infant mortality and its devastating effects. Significant health care inequities and disparities in black maternal and newborn outcomes are reported across the United States. This longstanding historical tragedy disproportionately impacts the Black community in comparison to other communities.

Background

- In 2020, 861 women were identified as having died of maternal causes in the United States, compared with 754 in 2019.
- The maternal mortality rate for 2020 was 23.8 deaths per 100,000 live births compared with a rate of 20.1 in 2019.
- 80% of pregnancy related complications are preventable.
- Black women are two times as likely to report thoughts about suicide (suicidal ideation) compared to white women in the immediate postpartum period.
- 1 in 8 women experience symptoms of postpartum depression.
- The maternal mortality rate for women aged 40 and over (81.9 per 100,000 live births) is nearly 8 times that for women under age 25.
- The maternal mortality rate for 2019 (20.1 deaths per 100,000 live births) was significantly higher than the rate for 2018.
- Black infants are 3.8 times as likely to die from complications related to low birthweight as compared to non-Hispanic white infants.
- Black infants have 2.3 times the infant mortality rate as White infants.
- Each year, more than 600,000 will suffer from a maternal mental health disorder in the U.S. and less than 15% of people will receive treatment.

Recommendations to Legislators

NBNA calls upon the 118th Congress to:

- Support legislation that will increase the diversity of the perinatal health care workforce.
- Re-introduce doula-related legislation to provide access to doula care and birth support that was provided during the Covid pandemic.
 - Passing effective, equitable doula legislation is imperative.
- Support the passage and implementation of all the full **Black Maternal Health Momnibus** Act which builds on existing legislation to comprehensively address every dimension of the black maternal health crisis in America.
- Support legislation that will provide investment in digital tools like telehealth to improve maternal health outcomes, especially in underserved areas.

- Support legislation that makes key investments in social determinants to save moms and end disparities in maternal health outcomes.
- Support legislation that invests in community-based programs that provide mental and behavioral health treatments and support to moms with maternal mental health conditions or substance use disorders.
- Support legislation that addresses intimate partner violence in pregnancy.
- Support legislation that will help develop and maintain programs for screening and treatment of maternal mental health (i.e., postpartum depression).

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