

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Helps introduce historic legislative package to address America's black maternal health crisis

Posted on Wednesday, Mar 11, 2020

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin, a member of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP), helped introduce an historic legislative package to address the United States' urgent maternal health crisis.

The *Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act of 2020*, led by Senator Kamala D. Harris (D-CA) and Representatives Lauren Underwood (IL-14) and Alma Adams (NC-12), will build on existing maternal health legislation by filling gaps through nine new bills to comprehensively address every dimension of the Black maternal health crisis. The *Black Maternal Health Momnibus* makes investments in social determinants of health, community-based organizations, the growth and diversification of the perinatal workforce, data collection and quality measure improvements, digital tools like telehealth, and innovative payment models. In addition to direct efforts to improve Black maternal health outcomes, the *Momnibus* focuses on high-risk populations, including women veterans, incarcerated women, and Native Americans.

“Maternal and infant mortality rates are tragically high in Wisconsin, and they are even higher in the Black community. We need to do more to make sure women and families have access to quality, affordable health care,” **said Senator Baldwin.** “We know that healthier pregnancies lead to healthier babies. That’s why

I'm working with my colleagues to provide more resources to expecting moms and address the challenges in our maternal health system so mothers and pregnant women can get the care they need."

"Black women across the country are dying from pregnancy and childbirth complications at astounding rates- and the disparity transcends income and education levels," **said Senator Harris.** "It is critical that the federal government work with states, local health providers, and mothers and their families to address the crisis and save lives. The Black Maternal Health Momnibus will address many barriers to care so we can improve maternal health outcomes and help ensure women—especially Black women—have access to comprehensive, culturally competent care."

"While maternal mortality rates continue to drop around the world, they are rising in the U.S., leaving behind devastated families and children who will grow up never knowing their moms. This crisis demands urgent attention and serious action to save the lives of Black mothers and all women across the county," **said Representative Underwood, co-founder and co-chair of the Black Maternal Health Caucus.** "The *Black Maternal Health Momnibus* is a sweeping effort to address our nation's maternal mortality crisis through effective, evidence-based, and culturally competent solutions. The time to end preventable maternal mortality and close racial and ethnic disparities in outcomes is long overdue. With the *Black Maternal Health Momnibus*, we can work together to solve this crisis right now. New moms and their children and families deserve nothing less."

"For decades, the US maternal mortality and morbidity rates have gotten worse for all mothers, but especially for Black women whose health outcomes are further compounded by systemic and structural racism," **said Representative Adams, co-founder and co-chair of the Black Maternal Health Caucus.** "The Black Maternal Health Momnibus is a historic piece of legislation that not only fills existing gaps in maternal healthcare, but also works to address pervasive maternal health disparities through solutions that are culturally-congruent and proven effective. The Momnibus provides a new roadmap to ensure our healthcare systems, providers, and society truly make Black maternal and infant health a priority. This legislation says, unequivocally, that Black Moms matter. I'm proud to stand with my colleagues to unveil a comprehensive package that tackles one of the greatest public health

crises of our time.”

The United States has the worst maternal death rates in the developed world, and the only rate that is rising. The maternal mortality rate is significantly higher among black women, who are three to four times more likely than white women to die from pregnancy-related complications. Black women also experience higher rates of maternal complications and infant mortality. They are twice as likely to lose an infant to premature death, and these disparities have not improved for more than 30 years.

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The *Black Maternal Health Momnibus* is composed of nine individual bills. The legislation will:

- Make critical investments in social determinants of health that influence maternal health outcomes, like housing, transportation, and nutrition;
- Provide funding to community-based organizations that are working to improve maternal health outcomes, particularly for Black women;
- Comprehensively study the unique maternal health risks facing women veterans and invest in VA maternity care coordination;
- Grow and diversify the perinatal workforce to ensure that every mom in America receives maternity care and support from trusted providers;
- Improve data collection processes and quality measures to better understand the causes of the maternal health crisis in the United States and inform solutions to address it;
- Invest in maternal mental health care and substance use disorder treatments;
- Improve maternal health care and support for incarcerated women;
- Invest in digital tools like telehealth to improve maternal health outcomes in underserved areas; and
- Promote innovative payment models to incentivize high-quality maternity care and continuity of health insurance coverage from pregnancy through labor and delivery and up to one year postpartum.

The *Black Maternal Health Momnibus* has also gained endorsements from many of the leading health and family organizations, including the Center for Reproductive Rights, the Black Mamas Matter Alliance, and the American College of Obstetricians

and Gynecologists. Additionally, the *Black Maternal Health Momnibus* is endorsed by 93 groups. A full list of endorsements of the Momnibus can be found [here](#).

In the Senate, the *Black Maternal Health Momnibus* is co-sponsored by Cory Booker (D-NJ), Gary Peters (D-MI), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Michael Bennet (D-CO), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), and Jeff Merkley (D-OR).

A one-pager of the *Black Maternal Health Momnibus* can be found [here](#).

A summary of the *Black Maternal Health Momnibus* can be found [here](#).

An online version of this release is available [here](#).

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