



June 9, 2020

The Honorable Bradley Byrne
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0703

Dear Congressman Byrne:

As an organization that represents the interests of 350,000 specialty nurses, the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses asks that you cosponsor H.R. 6142, the Black Maternal Health Omnibus Act of 2020, and further that you urge House leadership to make passing this bill the highest priority. The Act would end preventable maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity in the United States and close disparities in maternal health outcomes.

The tragic deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and too many others to list not only anger us, but their stories serve as beacons, shining a light to uncover the deeply entrenched institutional racism, social injustice and disparities that continue in today's society. AWHONN does not tolerate racism, bigotry, or unequal treatment of any human being. As nurses, we realize that racism is a public health crisis that is impacting the healthcare of women and newborns. Black lives matter, including during pregnancy and childbirth.

Black women are 3 to 4 times as likely to die from pregnancy-related causes as white women. [1] Severe maternal illness and death rates remain remarkably high in the United States compared to other developed countries. The United States ranks 49th out of 184 countries for maternal deaths and is one of eight countries where rates are on the rise. [2]

The Black Maternal Health Omnibus combines nine individual bills sponsored by members of the bipartisan Black Maternal Health Caucus. The legislation would:

- 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 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 people she can trust.
- 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.
- 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 1 year postpartum.

To cosponsor H.R. 6142, the Black Maternal Health Omnibus Act of 2020, please contact Jack DiMatteo (Jack.DiMatteo@mail.house.gov or 202-225-2976) in the office of Rep. Lauren Underwood.



If you have any questions or desire to further discuss these issues, please contact AWHONN Government Affairs Director Seth Chase at schase@awhonn.org or 202-261-2427.

Sincerely,

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[1] <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternalinfanthealth/pregnancy-relatedmortality.htm>

[2] <http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736%2814%2960696-6/fulltext>