

Structural Inequities Burden Mothers, Infants, and Families of Color: Support Policies that Reduce Disparities in Health Outcomes



The Problem:

The U.S. has the highest maternal mortality, neonatal mortality, and infant mortality rates among all developed countries and is the only country where the maternal mortality rate is increasing instead of decreasing. Stark racial and ethnic disparities persist in rates of pregnancy complications, pregnancy-related deaths, preterm and premature birth, infant mortality, SUID and SIDS. In the U.S. today, African American women are three to four times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes and have a preterm birth rate nearly 50 percent higher than white women.

Maternal, infant, and child health outcomes, including breastfeeding rates, are impacted by issues of intersectionality. Deep inequities in social determinants of health, structural racism, and the lack of access to health care and preventive services are among the many factors impacting outcomes in communities of color and low-income communities. Policy changes are needed to influence upstream determinants of health and address the inequities that keep too many families of color from achieving their full potential.

The Solutions:

- **Modernizing Obstetric Medicine Standards (MOMS) Act**

The MOMS Act, introduced in the Senate, would help reduce maternal deaths and complications by providing funding to states and hospitals to develop and implement standardized maternal safety best practices, in conjunction with the Department of Health and Human Services, to prevent and respond to complications arising from childbirth.

- **Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness and Advancing Innovation Act of 2019 (PAHPA)**

PAHPA, introduced in the House and added to the Senate calendar, would reauthorize certain programs under the Public Health Service Act and the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act with respect to public health security and all-hazards preparedness and response. The authorization for these programs expired in October 2018. Local, state, and federal agencies play a key role in emergency preparedness. It is essential that preparedness and response policies apply a health equity lens to ensure health disparities are not exacerbated during and in the aftermath of disasters.

- **Health Equity and Accountability Act**

The Health Equity and Accountability Act, introduced during past Congressional Sessions, features several comprehensive strategies aimed at eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities in order to achieve equity. This legislation reforms policies and expands federal health care resources for racial and ethnic minorities, as well as other underserved populations who face discrimination and barriers to care due to their immigration status, sex, age, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, and English proficiency.

Please support these measures to ensure that every one of our country's families can thrive.

U.S. Breastfeeding Committee • www.USBreastfeeding.org

