

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

## The Issue:

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.

## Current Status and Opportunities for Action:

- **Advance Legislation that Addresses Maternal and Infant Mortality, Reduces Health Inequities, and Promotes Maternal, Infant, and Child Health such as the MOMMA's Act (S.916/H.R. 1897)**

Several proposals have been introduced to address the high rates of maternal and infant mortality and outcome disparities, including the Mothers and Offspring Mortality and Morbidity Awareness (MOMMA's) Act (S. 916/H.R. 1897) which would extend Medicaid and WIC eligibility for postpartum women, ensuring that families have access to the health services they need.

- **Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness and Advancing Innovation Act of 2019 (PAHPAI) (H.R. 269/S. 1379)**

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. PAHPAI has passed both the House and the Senate and is awaiting the President's signature. The bill would strengthen and support public health emergency funds, improve the nation's health security strategy, strengthen preparedness and response, bolster the country's emergency response workforce, prioritize a threat-based approach, and increase communication in medical countermeasure advanced research and development, among numerous other provisions.

- **Health Equity and Accountability Act (forthcoming in the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress)**

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](http://www.USBreastfeeding.org)**

