



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: House Bill 837 – Public Health – Maternal Mortality and Morbidity – Implicit Bias Training and Study

SPONSOR: Delegate Pena-Melnyk, *et al.*

HEARING DATE: February 26, 2020

COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS House Bill 837 – Public Health – Maternal Mortality and Morbidity – Implicit Bias Training and Study**, which adds a requirement for evidence-based implicit bias training for health care professionals involved in perinatal care of patients under the Cultural and Linguistic Health Care Professional Competency Program. In addition, this bill requires the training to be completed by health care professionals involved in perinatal care every two years.

Implicit biases are beliefs that can affect behavior, even when individuals are not aware that they hold these beliefs.¹ Implicit biases can lead to behaviors that are harmful to maternal and infant health, and have been identified as a contributing factor in persistent disparities in United States birth outcomes.² Evidence shows that implicit bias impedes successful communication between patients and their health care providers.³ Without open channels of communication, warning signs for hemorrhage and hypertensive disorders can go undetected or unaddressed, and the outcome can be fatal.⁴

¹ Project Implicit, “Frequently Asked Questions,” <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/faqs.html> (last visited Feb. 25, 2020).

² The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, “Statement of Policy: ACOG Statement of Policy on Racial Bias,” <https://www.acog.org/-/media/Statements-of-Policy/Public/StatementofPolicy93RacialBias2017-2.pdf?dmc=1&ts=20190627T1345234685> (Feb. 2017); Howell EA. Reducing Disparities in Severe Maternal Morbidity and Mortality. *Clin Obstet Gynecol.* 2018;61(2):387–399. doi:10.1097/GRF.0000000000000349.

³ *Id.*

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Racial and Ethnic Disparities Continue in Pregnancy-Related Deaths” (Sept. 5, 2019), <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2019/p0905-racial-ethnic-disparities-pregnancy-deaths.html>.

Nationally, black women are four times more likely to die during or after pregnancy than their white counterparts.⁵ In Prince George's County, black women are more likely to have preterm and low birth weight infants compared to other races and ethnicities.⁶

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention both recommend implicit bias training to reduce disparities in birth outcomes.⁷ Requiring implicit bias training is an important first step in addressing this problem. All women deserve a positive birth experience free of implicit bias.

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS House Bill 837** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.

⁵ See Howell, *supra* note 2.

⁶ Christina Gray & Donna Perkins, Office of Assessment and Planning, Prince George's County Health Dept., 2019 Maternal and Infant Health Report, <https://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/3107>.

⁷ See The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, *supra* note 2; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *supra* note 4.