



TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

SB 1059 Maternal Health—Assessments Referrals and Reporting (Maryland Maternal Health Act 2024)

POSITION: Support

BY: Linda T. Kohn, President

Date: March 14, 2024

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization that works to influence public policy through education and advocacy. The League believes that all persons should have access to the same quality healthcare without regard to their socioeconomic status or race.

Unfortunately, health outcomes for pregnant women and their infants correlate with race and socioeconomic status. Women of color and their infants have a higher risk of negative health outcomes, including death, than white women. Similarly, women who are poor and their infants have a higher risk of negative health outcomes than women who are affluent. Differences in health insurance and access to health care play a role in these disparities. However, a woman's race is the most determinative risk factor. *See Kaiser Family Foundation, Racial Disparities in Maternal and Infant Health, Samantha Artiga and Usha Range, November 1, 2022,*

Senate Bill 1059 addresses these disparities. It requires health care providers who receive reimbursements from the Maryland Medical Assistance Program to complete a prenatal risk assessment form for all of their patients regardless of race. Likewise, hospitals and free standing-birthing centers that are reimbursed by the Maryland Medical Assistance Program must provide a woman who delivered a baby after a high risk pregnancy information about the circumstances of the delivery and about any risks or complications that could occur regardless of race. The hospital or free-standing birthing center must also contact the mother within 12 hours of her discharge to evaluate how she is doing.

The health of a mother and her child should not depend upon her race or socioeconomic status. Senate Bill 1059 tries to lessen these disparities by creating uniform standards for assessing prenatal risk and by requiring that hospitals and freestanding birthing centers provide the same type of resources and information to all women who delivered a baby after a high risk pregnancy. For these reasons the League of Women Voters Maryland, which represents more than 1,500 concerned citizens throughout Maryland, strongly urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 1059.

