

03/04/2024
Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

My name is Whitney N. Dula and I am a board certified lactation consultant, public health educator, and resident of District 25 under Delegates Toles, Roberson, and Roberts.

I am writing this letter in support of **House Bill 1051** as it relates to maternal health care in the State of Maryland. As a public health worker working in Montgomery County, I have first hand experience with patients dealing with pregnancy and postpartum complications that could have been caught sooner had appropriate follow-up and care been delivered.

In my work, my clients have repeatedly expressed feelings of being dismissed, unheard, rushed or delayed in seeking care for the symptoms they experience. Complications such as hypertension, preeclampsia, hemorrhaging, and breastfeeding difficulties could be effectively negated if proper follow-up was required. Just this last year, I have had clients detail their experience in which they were repeatedly told to wait for appointments, call back tomorrow, or just take over the counter medications for symptoms that many healthcare workers are told to be emergent. This blatant disregard is what is leading to Maryland's maternal disparity rate of over 3.7%. (*Black Maternal Health in Maryland, 2023*)

In addition to being a healthcare worker I am also a mother, a parent to two young women who may or may not also have children of their own one day. I would like to ensure that if they choose to have children that their Healthcare needs would be taken seriously so that they do not become yet another mortality statistic in this state. By having the necessary checks and balances we can ensure that both current and future residents of the state of Maryland can experience safe birth and postpartum.

Our physicians have taken oath to do no harm, and hospitals are supposed to be a place of healing. Let's ensure that we are holding those powers accountable, so that this current epidemic of maternal and infant mortality can end.

Being that my delegates are sponsors of this bill, I implore their colleagues to listen to the other testimonies of residents, professionals, and advocates and vote in support of this measure so that Maryland may be an example of how to properly affect change for mothers and the communities that they live in.

References: The Network for Public Health Law (March 2023). *Black Maternal Health in Maryland [Fact Sheet]*. The Network for Public Health Law, Eastern Office.
[chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.networkforphl.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Black-Maternal-Health-in-Maryland.pdf](https://www.networkforphl.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Black-Maternal-Health-in-Maryland.pdf)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Dula', written in a cursive style.

Whitney N. Dula, IBCLC, PMH-C, CPST
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