



**Committee:** House Health and Government Operations Committee

**Bill:** House Bill 1051 – Maternal Health – Assessments, Referrals, and Reporting (Maryland Maternal Health Act)

**Hearing Date:** March 6, 2024

**Position:** Support with Amendments

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The Maryland Affiliate of the American College of Nurse Midwives (ACNM) supports *House Bill 1051 – Maternal Health – Assessments, Referrals, and Reporting (Maryland Maternal Health Act)* with amendments. The bill strengthens the public health infrastructure approach to reducing maternal morbidity and mortality rates.

Maryland has significant room for improvement in maternal mortality and morbidity rates. In 2023, the rate of preterm births was 10.3% in Maryland as compared to 10.2% nationally. Black births were 1.4 times more likely than all other birth to be pre-term.<sup>i</sup> These numbers reflect the need for systemic improvement in our health care system with a particular focus on addressing the health disparities for pregnant people in Black and brown communities.

ACNM supports this legislation because it utilizes public health data to guide systemic change:

- By creating a report card for hospitals and freestanding birthing centers, consumers and their providers will be able to make more informed decisions about where to seek labor and delivery care. Public health researchers will also have more data to evaluate potential strategies to improve health outcomes for pregnancy and newborn care; and
- Through promoting widespread use of the prenatal risk assessment form and postpartum infant mortality and referral form, the legislation will enable local health departments and providers to work with patients in coordinating care and wrap-around services for high-risk pregnancies. This approach will ensure more

pregnant and postpartum individuals have support to address health issues as well as underlying determinants of health.

ACNM requests three amendments to this legislation:

- 1) On page 2 in line 19, strike “(2) DURING THE THIRD TRIMESTER OF THE PATIENT’S PREGNANCY” as it would be duplicative for providers to fill out a risk assessment form during the third trimester and at birth;
- 2) We understand the sponsor is considering adding an implementation workgroup to the bill. We would request the addition of a “representative of the Maryland Affiliate of American College of Nurse Midwives.”
- 3) On page 4, strike lines 29-31. This amendment would remove the requirement that birthing centers to submit report card language to participate in Medicaid. While we support the report card requirement, we are concerned about creating additional barriers to the establishment of freestanding birthing centers in the state. There are currently no birthing centers in Maryland, with the closure of the last freestanding birth center in Anne Arundel County in 2023.

We urge for a favorable vote, and we are committed to working with the sponsor and stakeholders and developing amendments that enable this legislation to improve the lives of pregnant individuals and families across Maryland. If we can provide any additional information, please contact Robyn Elliott at [relliott@policypartners.net](mailto:relliott@policypartners.net).

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.marchofdimes.org/peristats/reports/maryland/report-card>