



LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OF MARYLAND, INC.

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Chairwoman Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk
6 Bladen Street, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chairwoman Peña-Melnyk and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland offers strong favorable support for **House Bill 1051 – Maternal Health – Assessments, Referrals, and Reporting (Maryland Maternal Health Act of 2024)**, a bill that establishes requirements for hospitals to conduct risk assessments regarding maternal, prenatal, and postpartum infant health. It also establishes a Maryland Report Card for Birthing Facility Maternal Care to be used for determining the quality of care received at a hospital or birthing center. **This bill is on the 2024 legislative priority agenda of the Black Caucus.**

In the United States, Black women are 3 times more likely to die during and after childbirth compared to women of other races and ethnicities. Longstanding racism and misogynoir in healthcare have led to Black women's physical pain during and after pregnancy being dismissed or ignored altogether.

Maryland continues to see similar issues with how race and racism affect maternal mortality. Between 2010 and 2018, Black women had a significantly higher pregnancy-related death rate (30.2%) contrasted with white counterparts (11.4%). Additionally, for Black women in Maryland who survive pregnancy and childbirth, their children are 1.4 times more likely to be born prematurely (13.1 babies per 100,000) and are 1.5 times more likely to die post-birth (9.2 babies per 100,000).

House Bill 1051 will require all hospitals and freestanding birthing centers across Maryland to implement risk assessments for maternal, prenatal, and postpartum infant health. It will also require the Secretary of Health and the Maryland Health Care Commission to develop a scoring system to determine the quality of care that Black mothers and babies receive at these facilities. For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland supports **House Bill 1051** and asks that you vote favorably on this bill.

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland