



## Testimony in Support of House Bill 286

### Public Health - Maternal Mortality Review Program - Stakeholders

TO: Chair Pendergrass, and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee  
FROM: Demaune A. Millard, President & CEO, Family League of Baltimore  
DATE: February 5, 2020

Family League of Baltimore (Family League) supports House Bill 286, Public Health - Maternal Mortality Review Program - Stakeholders. This bill would expand the stakeholder group convened under the Maternal Mortality Review Program to “reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of women most impacted by maternal deaths in the state.”<sup>1</sup>

Through our work as a convener in the B’More for Healthy Babies strategy, we have focused on reversing the deep racial disparity in infant mortality rates across Baltimore City by utilizing the research of the City’s localized Fetal-Infant Mortality Review Team (FIMR). FIMR’s Community Action Team, as well as its two Neighborhood Action Teams, translate the recommendations of the FIMR Case Review Team into improved policies, systems, and public education campaigns that support maternal health and a decline in infant fatalities in targeted neighborhoods throughout the City.<sup>2</sup> The Maternal Mortality Review Committee (MMRC) is responsible for reviewing and exploring what are often preventable maternal deaths. In 2018, House Bill 1518 (Chapter 308) created the stakeholder group now convened under the MMRC, and House Bill 286 would take a critical step in moving that group toward a more racially and ethnically representative body.

Maternal mortality in the state is alarmingly on the rise; Maryland’s maternal mortality rate for 2011-2015 is 20% higher than its rate for the five years prior. Nationally, Black women have a maternal mortality rate that is more than 2.5 times that of White women, but that disparity is higher in Maryland at 2.74 times.<sup>3</sup> Risk of maternal mortality seems to be exacerbated by race, age, and residence in rural and high-poverty communities.<sup>4</sup>

As the designated Local Management Board for the City of Baltimore, Family League’s mission is to serve as an architect of change by promoting data-driven, collaborative initiatives and aligning resources to create lasting outcomes for children, families and communities. This work is guided by the State’s Child Well-being Results Areas. We support HB 286 due to its alignment with these result areas by working to ensure that “Babies are Born Healthy” and “Children are Healthy.”<sup>5</sup> Additionally, we applaud any efforts to further address the racial disparities that exist among both maternal and infant mortality rates across Maryland, and urge a favorable report on this bill.

*For more information contact Margo Quinlan, Public Policy Manager, at [mquinlan@familyleague.org](mailto:mquinlan@familyleague.org)*

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<sup>1</sup> 2020 Regular Session - House Bill 286 First Reader. <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2020RS/bills/hb/hb0286F.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> B’More for Healthy Babies (2016). *Fetal-Infant Mortality Review in Baltimore City*.

<http://www.healthybabiesbaltimore.com/uploads/files/Baltimore%20City%20FIMR%20Interim%20FY%202016-2017%20Report.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Maryland Maternal Mortality Review (2017). *Annual Report*. Maryland Department of Health

[http://healthymaryland.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/MMR-Report-2017\\_FINAL.pdf](http://healthymaryland.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/MMR-Report-2017_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> World Health Organization (2018). *Maternal Mortality Fact Sheet*. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/maternal-mortality>

<sup>5</sup> Maryland Governor’s Office for Children. “Maryland’s Child Well-Being Scorecard.” <https://goc.maryland.gov/reportcard/>