

House Bill 286 Maternal Mortality Review Program - Stakeholders

House Health and Government Operations Committee

February 5, 2020

Position: SUPPORT

The Mental Health Association of Maryland is the state's only volunteer, nonprofit citizen's organization that brings together consumers, families, professionals, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health and mental illness. We appreciate this opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 286.

HB 286 seeks to require, "to the extent practicable, the stakeholders convened, shall reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of women most impacted by the maternal deaths in the state." The Maternal Mortality Review (MMR) Program was established in Maryland statute in 2000. In 2018, HB 1518 established an MMR Stakeholders Group to review the findings and recommendations in the annual MMR Report; to examine issues resulting in disparities in maternal deaths; to review the status of implementation of previous recommendations; and to identify new recommendations with a focus on initiatives to address issues resulting in disparities. The stakeholders convened are expected to meet at least twice a year and submit a written report.

In Maryland, there are an average of 41 deaths each year among women who are pregnant or within one year postpartum. Those deaths which are pregnancy-related (where the cause of death is related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management) are highest among non-Hispanic Black women and 2.7 times the rate of white women. Among Black women, the leading causes of pregnancy-related death are hemorrhage and homicide, both of which are considered preventable. And, although the rate for pregnancy-related deaths has decreased by 59% from 2010 to 2016, the decrease has been greater among white women (over 50%) compared to Black women (23%), depicting clear racial disparities.

As the Stakeholder group continues to review the MMR Report each year, the representation of the group should remain consistent with the population they are reviewing. HB 286 seeks to add more diverse representation to the Stakeholder Group to provide insight and recommendations based on the current data.

MHAMD seeks to suggest that HB 286 offer accommodations to adequately support a more diverse representation within the Stakeholder Group. This could include the ability to call in to meetings, provide compensation or childcare and other supports as needed. With these supports in place, MHAMD believes that adequate representation can happen, deep and substantial racial bias can be addressed and unraveled, and conclusions and conceptions can be offered to lower the maternal mortality death rate across the state.

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