

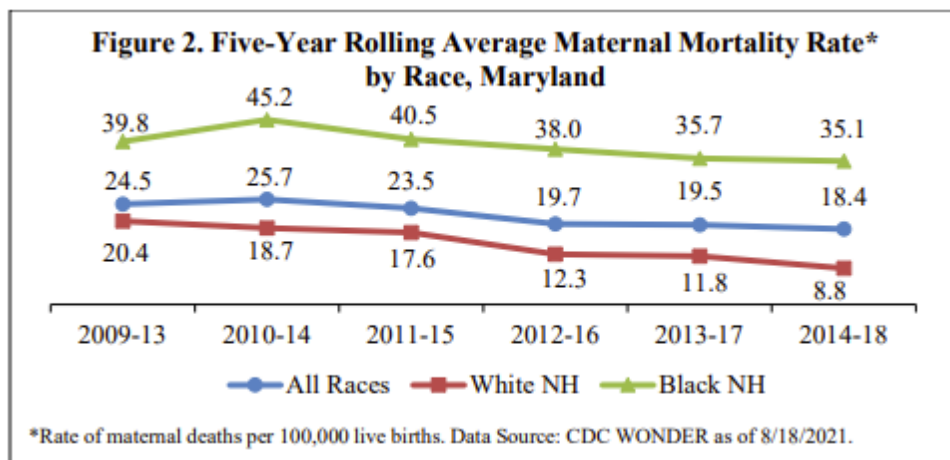


**Testimony Concerning SB 644**  
**“Maternal Mortality Review Program - Local Teams - Access to Information and Records”**  
**Submitted to the House Health and Government Operations Committee**  
**March 28, 2023**

**Position: Favorable**

Maryland Family Network (MFN) supports SB 644, which would allow Local Maternal Mortality Review Teams to have immediate access to records regarding the deceased birthing individual whose death is being reviewed.

While the number of birthing individuals who die related to childbirth is quite low, the maternal mortality rate in the United States is significantly higher than most other developed nations. Furthermore, while Maryland’s Maternal Mortality Rate is decreasing, the racial disparities in maternal mortality are increasing. According to the State’s Maternal Mortality Review Program, “The 2009-2013 Black non-Hispanic MMR was 2.0 times the White non-Hispanic MMR, while the 2014-2018 Black non-Hispanic MMR was 4.0 times the White non-Hispanic MMR.”<sup>1</sup> These disparities are illustrated in the chart below.<sup>2</sup>



We applaud this body for passing HB 796/SB 602 in 2019 to allow the establishment of Local Maternal Mortality Review Teams in addition to the statewide Maternal Mortality Review Team. However, there have been a lot of delays for the local team getting the records for the reviews. Including “immediate access” in the statute will allow the reviews of deaths to be timelier and facilitate expediency in taking action to prevent future deaths. Another issue preventing robust case reviews is inadequate health records to allow the local review team to have a full picture of that individual’s death. SB 644’s proposed changes to ensure a local team can access an individual’s prenatal care records will ensure the review of the death can include the depth that is needed. In Baltimore City, in part due to the depth of the local Fetal

<sup>1</sup> “Maryland Maternal Mortality Review 2020 Annual Report,” Health –General Article § 13-207 at p. 6. <https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/mch/Documents/MMR/HG%20%20a7%20%20a7%2013-1207%2013-1208%20and%20%20a713-1212%20-%20Maryland%20Maternal%20Mortality%20Review%202020.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. at p.7.



and Infant Mortality Review case reviews, the B'more for Healthy Babies initiative has significantly reduced racial disparities in infant mortality for Black babies. By having additional data to assess the systemic issues that contributed to a birthing individual's death, we hope to decrease and ultimately eliminate racial disparities for birthing individuals as well.

MFN urges this committee to issue a favorable report on SB 644 to increase local Maternal Morality Review Teams' effectiveness and ultimately better prevent the deaths of birthing individuals across Maryland.