



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

March 7, 2023

The Honorable Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: HB 876 - Maternal Mortality Review Program – Local Teams – Access to Information and Records - Letter of Information

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) is submitting this letter of information for House Bill (HB) 876 - Maternal Mortality Review Program – Local Teams – Access to Information and Records. HB 876 requires that local maternal mortality review programs be provided immediate access to all information and records related to pregnancy-associated deaths being reviewed by the local review team.

Maryland's maternal mortality rate in the most recent five-year average data is 12 percent below the national rate.¹ While the U.S. MMR continued to increase, the Maryland rate has decreased slightly. It remains important to continue to facilitate an understanding of the drivers of maternal mortality and complications of pregnancy and better understand the associated disparities.

The Maryland Maternal Mortality Review (MMR) Program (the MMR Program) is charged with reviewing pregnancy-associated deaths² of birthing individuals in Maryland and providing recommendations for the prevention of future deaths.³ The MMR Program is currently working to better align with national best practices for multi-disciplinary, comprehensive case reviews as established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).⁴

The MMR Program values the work of local MMR teams and encourages local coordination in records requests with state efforts. Currently, Baltimore City is the only jurisdiction with a local MMR team. MDH established a data use agreement (DUA), per CDC best practices, with Baltimore City's team in 2021, and has shared de-identified case data for deaths that occurred in 2016-2018 and will continue to share this data as it becomes available. MDH notes that the MMR Program is a medical review committee, as defined under §1-401 of the Health Occupations Article. Under this statute, the proceedings, records, and files of a medical review committee are confidential. MDH is currently

¹ Health-General Article, §§ 13-1207—13-1208 and §13-1212, Annotated Code of Maryland - 2020 Annual Report – Maryland Maternal Mortality Review; https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/Exec/MDH/MMRP/HG13-1212_2020.pdf

² A pregnancy-associated death is defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as “the death of a woman while pregnant or within one year or 365 days of pregnancy conclusion, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy, regardless of the cause of death.”

³ Health-General Article, §13-1201 through §13-1207, Annotated Code of Maryland

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022, September 19). *Enhancing reviews and surveillance to eliminate maternal mortality (erase MM)*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved February 15, 2023, from <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternal-mortality/erase-mm/index.html>

amending the DUA with the Baltimore City Health Department to facilitate expediting local MMR teams' records requests from providers and health care facilities, to the extent allowed by law.

If you have any questions please contact Megan Peters, Acting Director, Office of Governmental Affairs, at megan.peters@maryland.gov or (410) 260-3190.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "LH Scott". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "LH" being particularly prominent.

Laura Herrera Scott, M.D, M.P.H.
Secretary