



**2023 SESSION
POSITION PAPER**

BILL: SB 644 – Maternal Mortality Review Program – Local Teams – Access to Information and Records

COMMITTEE: House Health and Government Operations Committee

POSITION: Letter of Support

BILL ANALYSIS: SB 644 would require that local Maternal Mortality Review Teams be provided immediate access to all information and records, including information on prenatal care maintained by health care providers regarding a woman whose death is being reviewed by that local team.

POSITION RATIONALE: The Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO) supports SB 644. Maternal mortality is a significant health challenge in Maryland. The national maternal mortality rate (MMR) was 17.4 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2018, the last year for which national data are available. In previous years, the Maryland MMR had consistently been higher than the national rate. For the period of 2009 to 2013, the MD MMR was 7% higher than the national rate. In the last decade, the MD rate fell below the national rate. However, both the US and MD rates remain above the Healthy People 2020 objective MICH-5 target of 11.4 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.

In the US in 2018, Black non-Hispanic women had an MMR 2.5 times greater than White non-Hispanic women, a disparity that has persisted since the 1940s. In Maryland, the disparities are increasingly worrisome. The 2009-2013 Black non-Hispanic MMR was 2 times the White non-Hispanic MMR, while the 2014-2018 Black non-Hispanic MMR was 4 times the White non-Hispanic MMR. Given this racial disparity, it appears that the recent decrease in the MD MMR is a result of the decrease in the White non-Hispanic MMR. Recent data from the University of Maryland indicate that the adverse effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on MMR disproportionately affected African American mothers, further worsening already unacceptable disparities.

Addressing the root causes of these horrifying statistics requires immediate and comprehensive access to the electronic medical records (EMR) of the affected women so that the relevant state mandated review boards can analyze and address the medical, economic, and social factors contributing to maternal deaths in childbirth. This bill gives the local Maternal Mortality Review boards faster and more comprehensive access to EMR data that can save lives.

For these reasons, the Maryland Association of County Health Officers submits this letter of support for SB 644. For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, MACHO Executive Director at rmaioral@jhu.edu or 410-937-1433.