

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 15, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
S-230, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Schumer:

We write to express our strong support for the inclusion of policies to address America's Black maternal health crisis in future legislative packages to continue our nation's recovery from the coronavirus pandemic and build back better. The pandemic has disproportionately harmed Black people in the United States—including by exacerbating the preexisting maternal health crisis. It is imperative that the federal government make further comprehensive investments to improve maternal health outcomes and eliminate maternal health disparities for Black people in the United States.

Across the United States, Black people disproportionately experience complications and die during pregnancy and childbirth. Black people are three to four times more likely to experience pregnancy-related death.<sup>1</sup> Black people display earlier signs of preeclampsia and are at three times the risk of postpartum hemorrhaging as white people.<sup>2</sup> Chronic stress caused by racism and discrimination has been linked to adverse health outcomes for Black people at all stages of life.<sup>3</sup> These alarming trends span all income and education levels.<sup>4</sup>

The coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated America's Black maternal health crisis. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, pregnant and recently pregnant people are at an increased risk for severe illness from the coronavirus, and pregnant people who

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<sup>1</sup> Dr Andreea A. Creanga et al., *Pregnancy-Related Mortality in the United States, 2011–2013*, *Obstetrics and Gynecology* (Aug. 2017) (online at <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28697109/#affiliation-1>).

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Sajid Sahule et al., *Racial Disparities in Comorbidities, Complications, and Maternal and Fetal Outcomes in Women with Preeclampsia/Eclampsia*, *Hypertension in Pregnancy* (Nov. 2015) (online at [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4782921/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4782921/)); Dr. Heba M. Eltoukhi et al., *The Health Disparities of Uterine Fibroids for African American Women: A Public Health Issue*, *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* (Mar. 2014) (online at [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3874080/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3874080/)).

<sup>3</sup> The Century Foundation, *Racism, Inequality, and Health Care for African Americans* (Dec. 19, 2019) (online at <https://tcf.org/content/report/racism-inequality-health-care-african-americans/>).

<sup>4</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Racial and Ethnic Disparities Continue in Pregnancy-Related Deaths* (Sept. 5, 2019) (online at [www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2019/p0905-racial-ethnic-disparities-pregnancy-deaths.html](http://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2019/p0905-racial-ethnic-disparities-pregnancy-deaths.html)).

become infected with the coronavirus are at an increased risk for adverse pregnancy outcomes.<sup>5</sup> The economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic—including increased food and housing insecurity—have worsened preexisting health disparities for Black people.<sup>6</sup>

Under your leadership, our nation has taken significant steps to combat the Black maternal health crisis. Most significantly, using the framework of President Biden’s American Rescue Plan, Congress enacted an option for states to extend postpartum Medicaid coverage to a full year following pregnancy—a reform that will allow new mothers to access health care for the full postpartum period. Beginning in April 2022, states will have this option for five years.<sup>7</sup>

On May 6, 2021, the Committee on Oversight and Reform held a hearing to examine the maternal mortality and morbidity crisis experienced by Black birthing people in the United States. During this hearing, advocates, health care providers, and medical experts testified to the urgent need for further investments to address the disproportionate risk of death and adverse outcomes Black people experience before, during, and after pregnancy.<sup>8</sup>

President Biden’s American Families Plan proposes a \$3 billion investment to improve maternal health.<sup>9</sup> This funding would provide an opportunity to permanently extend postpartum Medicaid coverage to one full year—as proposed in Congresswoman Robin Kelly’s MOMMA’s Act and Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley’s MOMMIES Act<sup>10</sup>—and to comprehensively address every dimension of America’s maternal health crisis—as proposed in the Black Maternal Health Omnibus Act, championed by Black Maternal Health Caucus Co-Chairs Lauren Underwood and Alma Adams.<sup>11</sup>

America’s Black maternal health crisis is rooted in its historical and ongoing legacy of systemic racism, and our nation’s recovery must address the health disparities that left Black mothers and families in crisis even before the coronavirus struck. We ask for your continued

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<sup>5</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Investigating the Impact of COVID-19 During Pregnancy* (May 13, 2021) (online at [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/special-populations/pregnancy-data-on-covid-19/what-cdc-is-doing.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/special-populations/pregnancy-data-on-covid-19/what-cdc-is-doing.html)).

<sup>6</sup> Dr. Leo Lopez III, Dr. Louis H. Hart III, and Dr. Mitchell H. Katz, *Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Related to COVID-19*, *Journal of the American Medical Association* (Jan. 22, 2021) (online at <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2775687>).

<sup>7</sup> American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, Pub. L. No. 117-2.

<sup>8</sup> Committee on Oversight and Reform, *Birthing While Black: Examining America’s Black Maternal Health Crisis* (May 6, 2021) (online at <https://oversight.house.gov/legislation/hearings/birthing-while-black-examining-america-s-black-maternal-health-crisis>).

<sup>9</sup> White House Gender Policy Council, *How the American Rescue Plan, the American Jobs Plan, and the American Families Plan Meet the Moment for Moms this Mother’s Day* (May 9, 2021) (online at [www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/blog/2021/05/09/how-the-american-rescue-plan-the-american-jobs-plan-and-the-american-families-plan-meet-the-moment-for-moms-this-mothers-day/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/blog/2021/05/09/how-the-american-rescue-plan-the-american-jobs-plan-and-the-american-families-plan-meet-the-moment-for-moms-this-mothers-day/)).

<sup>10</sup> H.R. 1897, 116th Cong. (2019); H.R. 3063, 117th Cong. (2021).

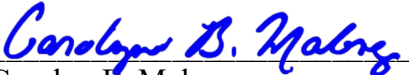
<sup>11</sup> H.R. 959.

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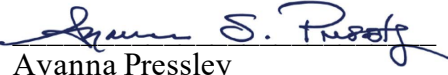
leadership in support of policies that would build upon the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 to end our nation's Black maternal health crisis.


Thank you for your immediate attention to this matter.

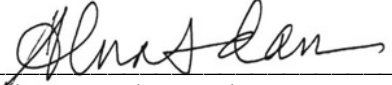
Sincerely,


  
Carolyn B. Maloney  
Chairwoman  
Committee on Oversight and Reform

  
Robin L. Kelly  
Member of Congress

  
Ayanna Pressley  
Member of Congress

  
Coni Bush  
Member of Congress

  
Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.  
Co-Chair  
Black Maternal Health Caucus

  
Lauren Underwood  
Co-Chair  
Black Maternal Health Caucus

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Ranking Member  
Committee on Oversight and Reform