

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

May 6, 2021

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro  
Comptroller General of the United States  
Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

America is experiencing a Black maternal health crisis. 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 and three times more likely to have fibroids that can cause postpartum hemorrhaging than white people.<sup>1</sup> Black people also display earlier signs of preeclampsia, and chronic stress caused by racism and discrimination has been linked to adverse health outcomes for Black people at all stages of life.<sup>2</sup> These alarming trends span income and education levels and constitute a failure of the American health care system.<sup>3</sup>

Our nation's Black maternal health crisis is rooted in its historical and ongoing legacy of systemic racism, and the federal government's effort to address these disparities must be targeted at structural anti-Blackness both inside and outside birth settings.

This urgent public health crisis disproportionately impacts incarcerated people, who face additional systemic barriers to quality maternity care. We request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) immediately conduct:

1. An analysis of the number of incarcerated people in the United States who are pregnant;

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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>); 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>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/)); 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/>).

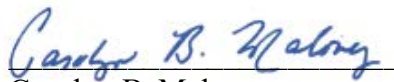
<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Racial and Ethnic Disparities Continue in Pregnancy-Related Deaths* (Sept. 5, 2019) (online at [www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2019/p0905-racial-ethnic-disparities-pregnancy-deaths.html](http://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2019/p0905-racial-ethnic-disparities-pregnancy-deaths.html)).

2. An analysis of disproportionate adverse maternal health outcomes experienced by incarcerated people in the United States—particularly incarcerated people from racial and ethnic minority groups; and
3. An evaluation of what data is needed to better understand the disproportionate impact of America’s maternal health crisis on incarcerated people in the United States—including the extent to which limitations in data collection and existing quality measures inhibit GAO’s ability to evaluate and draw conclusions regarding the above requests.

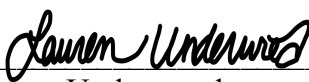
Much of this request is included in the Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act of 2021, which Black Maternal Health Caucus Co-Chairs Lauren Underwood and Alma Adams have introduced in the House of Representatives.<sup>4</sup>

If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Miles Lichtman and Tori Anderson with Chairwoman Maloney’s staff at (202) 225-5051 and Jack DiMatteo with Congresswoman Underwood’s staff at (202) 225-2976.

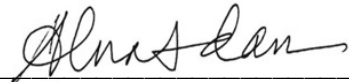
Sincerely,



Carolyn B. Maloney  
Chairwoman  
Committee on Oversight  
and Reform



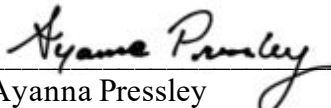
Lauren Underwood  
Co-Chair  
Black Maternal Health Caucus




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



Robin L. Kelly  
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley  
Member of Congress



Cori Bush  
Member of Congress



Gwen Moore  
Member of Congress

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

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<sup>4</sup> H.R. 959.