

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.¹ 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.² These alarming trends span income and education levels and constitute a failure of the American health care system.³

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.

In light of this urgent public health crisis, we request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) immediately assess the barriers to maternal health education and access to care in the United States, including:

1. Barriers for low-income women and women from racial and ethnic minority groups to entering and completing accredited midwifery education programs and

¹ 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/).

² 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/); 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/>).

³ 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).

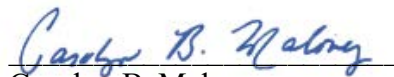
accredited education programs for other health professional careers related to maternity care;

2. Barriers to accessing care provided by midwives and other maternity care professionals, particularly for low-income women and women from racial and ethnic minority groups; and
3. 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.⁴

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.

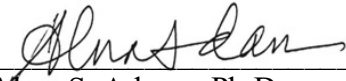
Sincerely,



Carolyn B. Maloney
Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight
and Reform



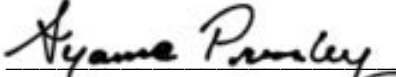
Lauren Underwood
Co-Chair
Black Maternal Health Caucus



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

⁴ H.R. 959.