

Testimony of The Honorable Laura A. Gillen (NY-04)
“Member Day Hearing”
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
March 5, 2025

Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro, and Members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I am here today as a colleague, as a mother, and as a proud member of the bipartisan Black Maternal Health Caucus -- to ask you to continue to make critical, lifesaving investments to help reduce inequities in maternal health.

Mr. Chairman, having a baby and starting a family is a fundamental part of the American dream for so many in our country. We should do everything we can to ensure that mothers of all backgrounds are able to safely deliver happy and healthy children.

Speaking with women and families across my district on the South Shore of Nassau County on Long Island, I’ve heard about the real impact of enormous disparities in maternal health outcomes that women of color face.

The facts are clear: black women are three times more likely to die from a pregnancy-related cause than other women. They are also twice as likely to lose an infant to premature death.

I promised my community that when I got to Congress, I would join the Black Maternal Health Caucus and work with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to help fix these devastating inequities. We can do much more to support mothers at every stage -- from fertility care to pregnancy, delivery, and postpartum.

In Fiscal Year 2026, Congress provided a \$10 million increase in funding for the NIH IMPROVE initiative for research on maternal mortality. Today, I am urging you to provide another \$10 million increase, bringing total funding for the IMPROVE initiative to \$73.4 million, and target funding for populations that are disproportionately affected.

I also urge the Subcommittee to increase funding for the Special Programs of Regional and National Significance (SPRANS) portion of Child and Maternal Health Block Grants, particularly the Maternal Health Research Collaborative for Minority-Serving Institutions, or MSIs. This program strengthens research capacity, trains providers, and helps develop evidence-based solutions to address maternal health disparities.

Investing in programs like the IMPROVE initiative, SPRANS, and MSIs will make a real difference for mothers across the country. These programs support data-driven research and projects, strengthen our healthcare delivery system, and help save lives.

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, let's help give more mothers a better chance at a safe and healthy pregnancy.

I look forward to working with you and our colleagues on both sides of the aisle to reduce disparities, improve black maternal health, and help mothers, children and families.

Thank you, and I yield back.