

Congressman Cohen's Energy and Commerce Committee Testimony

Chairwoman Eshoo, Ranking Member Burgess, I want to thank you for allowing members to testify about our legislative priorities within the Energy and Commerce Committee's Subcommittee on Health. I appreciate your time and Chairman Pallone's leadership of the Committee in the 116th Congress.

As we meet in the room named for a champion of health care, I am reminded of Mr. Dingell's remarkable legacy of advocacy for access to comprehensive care.

I introduced H.R. 117, the Nationally Enhancing the Wellbeing of Babies through Outreach and Research Now (NEWBORN) Act, which builds from his belief that health care is a basic human right.

The NEWBORN Act gives a voice to children who have been taken by our country's ongoing crisis of infant mortality. Fifty-four developed countries have lower rates of infant mortality than the United States. As the wealthiest country in the world, the United States has no excuse. We as Members of Congress have no excuse.

The NEWBORN Act would help address this problem by creating infant mortality-focused pilot programs in the highest-risk areas of the country. The pilot programs would focus on addressing the top five reasons for infant mortality: birth defects, preterm birth and low birth weight, sudden infant death syndrome, maternal pregnancy complications, and/or injuries to the infant.

These deaths disproportionately affect black women. In my district that is predominately black, it is estimated that 9 out of every 1,000 children born will not live to see their first birthday.¹

¹ <https://wreg.com/2019/02/20/report-85-percent-of-tennessee-maternal-deaths-preventable/>

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By focusing studies in the highest-risk areas of the country, the NEWBORN Act directly confronts this disparity. Its pilot programs would provide insightful data and immediate support to areas with the highest rates of infant mortality.

I encourage the Committee to hold a hearing to consider the immediate threats the maternal and infant mortality crisis poses to women and children – especially black women. It is our duty to act, and I believe the NEWBORN Act would be crucial step forward.