

U.S. House of Representatives Energy and Commerce Committee

Subcommittee on Health Hearing:

“Better Data and Better Outcomes: Reducing Maternal Mortality in the U.S.”

Testimony of: Congresswoman Jaime Herrera Beutler

September 27, 2018

Thank you Chairman Burgess, Ranking Member Green, and Members of the Subcommittee for holding this hearing on reducing maternal mortality in the United States and for this opportunity to speak in strong support of the discussion draft of the *Preventing Maternal Deaths Act* that is before us.

The very title of this bill speaks to why I have introduced this bipartisan legislation and to why we are here today. We are here to take vital steps toward moving a bill in Congress that I believe will save lives and prevent more families from suffering the profound loss of a mother.

The testimonies today will shed light on a truly disturbing trend in our nation – more mothers die from pregnancy-related or pregnancy-associated causes here in the U.S. than *any* other developed country in the world.

Although the assumption is often that a nation with some of the most advanced obstetric and emergency care would also demonstrate low maternal mortality rates, tragically, an estimated 700 - 900 maternal deaths occur in the U.S. every year. Not only does the U.S. rank 47th for maternal mortality globally, we have actually seen an *increase* in maternal deaths in recent years. This makes us one of only eight nations in the world with *rising* maternal mortality rates.

For the families, single fathers, grandparents, and children who have lost a mother, perhaps the most heart-wrenching of all is that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that *60 percent* of these maternal deaths could have been prevented.

As a mother, a citizen, and a lawmaker, I believe that we can and must do better. It is time for this to become a national priority, which is why I am proud to speak in support of the Preventing Maternal Deaths Act.

This legislation would enable states to establish or strengthen maternal mortality review committees. MMRCs bring together local experts in maternal, infant, and public health to review each and every instance of a pregnancy-related or pregnancy-associated death in order to understand what went wrong and how to save future mothers' lives.

As Members of the Committee are aware, we know of many conditions that contribute to high maternal mortality rates, such as preeclampsia, gestational diabetes, obstetric hemorrhage, as well as emerging challenges such as suicide and substance use disorder. However, the truth is that the available data is woefully inadequate, which greatly hinders our ability to understand why mothers are dying.

The Preventing Maternal Deaths Act seeks to address this data deficiency by empowering states to participate in national information sharing through the CDC, allowing for increased collaboration and the development of best practices.

Before closing, I would like to note that the legislation before us was crafted from key policy recommendations made by multiple organizations that are supporting this bill - including the Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, March of Dimes, Preeclampsia Foundation, and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine.

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the families, fathers, and advocates who have spoken out, shared their stories, and called for change. These courageous individuals are the champions of this movement and this bill.

With wide bipartisan support and over 160 cosponsors in the House, I remain committed to passing Preventing Maternal Deaths Act into law and I look forward to working with the Committee and my colleagues in Congress to accomplish this imperative goal.

Thank you.