

May 20, 2021

The Honorable G.K. Butterfield
U.S. House of Representatives
2080 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lisa Blunt Rochester
U.S. House of Representatives
1724 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Gus Bilirakis
U.S. House of Representatives
2354 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Butterfield, Bilirakis, and Blunt Rochester:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am writing to express our support for H.R.1218, “Data Mapping to Save Moms’ Lives Act.” This legislation would instruct the Federal Communications Commission to consult with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to determine ways to incorporate data on maternal health outcomes for at least one year postpartum into broadband health mapping tools in an effort to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity in the U.S.

The AMA is committed to working with a variety of stakeholders to tackle the issues surrounding maternal mortality and morbidity. The U.S. has the highest maternal mortality rate among developed countries, and according to the CDC, 60 percent or more of these maternal deaths are preventable. Furthermore, CDC data shows that Black and Indigenous women are three to four times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than White women.

Our AMA is committed to promoting equitable access to telehealth services, especially for at-risk and under-resourced patient populations and communities. In [a recent survey by the COVID-19 Healthcare Coalition](#), 79 percent of patient respondents reported satisfaction with their telehealth visit and 78 percent felt that their health concern could be addressed via telehealth.¹ Telehealth services can be especially helpful for new mothers, who are adapting to the demanding schedules of caring for an infant. Commuting to a doctor’s office for a visit may require finding childcare for older children or require commuting long distances for those in rural or other underserved areas, which may deter some from seeking care. As a result of many of these and other challenges, 20-40 percent of women have difficulties attending these critical postpartum visits between three and eight weeks after delivery.² As such, the AMA supports ensuring new mothers having access and coverage to telehealth services and broadband and internet-connected devices for both physician practices and patients, with the goal of reducing barriers to accessing postpartum care and addressing health disparities. This bill would examine the intersection of broadband access and maternal care delivery by requiring the United States Government Accountability Office to conduct a study, that would provide much needed data report on the effectiveness of internet connectivity in reducing maternal morbidity rates.

¹ <https://c19hcc.org/static/catalog-resources/telehealth-patient-survey-analysis-c19hcc.pdf>.

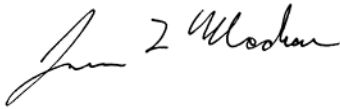
² <https://www.kff.org/womens-health-policy/issue-brief/telemedicine-and-pregnancy-care/>.

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Page 2

Pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period will always carry some degree of risk. We as a nation must do all we can to minimize that risk and help ensure that mothers and their babies thrive throughout pregnancy and for the rest of their lives.

Thank you for your leadership on this issue. We look forward to working with you to achieve passage of the “Data Mapping to Save Moms’ Lives Act” to improve access to broadband services and comprehensive maternal health resources for our nation’s mothers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim L Madara". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "M".

James L. Madara, MD