

September 11, 2018

TESTIMONY
OF
CHARLES JOHNSON IV
HUSBAND OF THE LATE KIRA JOHNSON
FOUNDER OF 4KIRA4MOMS
ADVOCATE FOR IMPROVED MATERNAL HEALTH POLICIES

BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

“BETTER DATA AND BETTER OUTCOMES: REDUCING MATERNAL MORTALITY IN

THE U.S.”

9:15 a.m., FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2018

Testimony of Charles Johnson IV, Founder of 4Kira4Moms
in Support of H.R. 1318: Preventing Maternal Mortality Act of 2017

“BETTER DATA AND BETTER OUTCOMES: REDUCING MATERNAL MORTALITY IN
THE U.S.”

U.S. House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health

September 14, 2018

Good Morning Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Green, members of the committee: my name is Charles Johnson the IV. I'd like to thank the committee for inviting me to testify today on H.R. 1318: Preventing Maternal Deaths Act of 2017. I have envisioned the opportunity to speak before this committee for sometime now and could not be more grateful than to share my family's story with you today.

I have just introduced myself to you in my opening statement as Charles Johnson the IV, however, these days I am known as “Charles and Langston's Dad.” Following the esteemed title of Dad, is that of “Kira's husband.”

I met Kira several times before we connected. Trying to catch Kira's attention was like trying to catch a butterfly. Kira was the most amazing person I have ever met. She spoke four different languages, lived in China and had run several companies. Her idea of a relaxing date

was skydiving...her idea of a romantic date was drag racing. I was smitten with her zest for life- her enthusiasm- I couldn't wait to see what was going to happen next. We got married in a surprise destination wedding, one which I took pains to make sure I made an impressive impact on my bride, like she made on me everyday. It was a dream come true: our wedding, our honeymoon, our new life as a married couple, the start of our new family. We had the rest of our lives in front of us! Nothing could stop us.

On April 12, 2016 my life partner, my best friend and amazing Mom, Kira lost her life after a routine scheduled c-section at Cedars Sinai delivering our 2nd son, Langston Johnson. Kira had delivered our first son, Charles V, via cesarean section, so we were both prepared for the process, procedure and recovery. After delivering another perfect baby, I was sitting next to Kira by her bedside in the recovery room. That is when I first noticed blood in her catheter. I notified staff immediately. A series of tests were ordered. Along with a CT scan to be performed "STAT". I understood "STAT" to mean the CT scan would be performed immediately. Hours passed and Kira's symptoms escalated throughout the rest of the afternoon and into the evening. We were told by the medical staff at Cedars Sinai Kira was not a priority and we waited for her CT scan to be done...we waited for the hospital to act so she could begin her recovery. Kira kept telling me, "Charles, I'm so cold; Charles, I don't feel right." She repeated these same words to me for several hours. After more than 10 hours of waiting. After 10 hours of watching my wife's condition deteriorate. After 10 hours of watching Kira suffer in excruciating pain needlessly. After 10 hours of begging and pleading them to help her. The medical staff at Cedars Sinai finally took action. As they prepared Kira for surgery, I was holding her hand as we walked down the hall to the operating room. Kira looked at me and

said, “Baby, I’m scared.” I told her, without doubt, everything was going to be fine. The doctor told me I would see her in 15 minutes. Kira was wheeled into surgery and it was discovered that she had massive internal bleeding caused by horrible medical negligence that occurred during her routine C-section. She had approximately 3liters of blood in her abdomen. Kira died at 2:22 a.m. April 17, 2016. Langston was 11 hours old.

As someone who experienced first hand what it is like to have your spouse die in front of you, I do not have the words to describe the loss my family has suffered. My boys no longer have their Mother. Kira was the most amazing role model and Mother any boy could ever wish to have. I no longer have the love of my life; my best friend.

I vowed that I would take this tragedy and turn it into a mission fueled by the memory of Kira and the passion she brought to life every day. I have taken my grief and found peace by tirelessly working on maternal health and maternal outcomes. I am the founder of 4Kira4Moms. 4Kira4Moms mission to advocate for improved maternal health policies and regulations, to educate the public about the impact of maternal mortality in communities, provide peer support to the victim's family, friends, and promote the idea that maternal mortality should be viewed, and discussed, as a human rights issue. My Kira lost her life, and I simply could not believe that her death, my family’s experience, was not an anomaly. My situation and my family are not unique. The maternal mortality rate is rising in the United States. According to the Lancet, 26.7 women out of 100,000 die directly as a direct result of maternal mortality. Maternal mortality figures have been rising exponentially in the United States over the past 2 decades.. In 1990, the US had 674 recorded maternal mortality deaths

per 100K; by 2015, the number had risen to 1063 women per 100K. Women color, regardless of income or education, are dying at a rate of 3 to 4 times higher. My wife is now a 2017 maternal mortality rate statistic.

Each maternal death is equal to approximately 70 mothers experience a “near miss”, meaning they almost die. Based on CDC figures, approximately 50K mothers almost died from childbirth as recent as 2014. This has to stop!

I'm here today because the committee wanted to hear my story, Kira's story, Charles and Langston's story. The importance of passing H.R. 1318: Preventing Maternal Mortality Act of 2017 is part of that story. This country deserves to know why our Mother's are dying. Women and families who want to bear children should know what leads to maternal mortality, and “near misses.” I want to help everyone out there who wishes to someday become a parent, the most blessed gift in the world, and every provider who helps those amazing women bring life into the world, to understand what to look for; how to help, when to listen.

Thank you for the opportunity to hear my testimony today. The time is now for political will to address a situation that chose me without any knowledge. HR 1318: Preventing Maternal Mortality Act of 2017 will assist states to give us the knowledge on why our country's Mothers are dying and how to help put an end to such tragedy. That knowledge may have saved Kira's life.

ADDENDUM:

[4Moms4Kira Campaign](#)

[How Judge Hatchett's Son Is Coping After His Wife's Childbirth Death: 'I Take It Day by Day'](#)

[Maternal Mortality: an American Crisis](#)

[Too many mothers are dying after childbirth. A hospital hopes to save them.](#)