

September 12, 2018

House of Representatives
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

Dear Members of the Committee,

Having a new baby is supposed to be the happiest time in a woman's life. Not always.

New mothers in the United States are dying at increasing numbers. In fact, the United States has the **highest rate** of maternal mortality than any other developed country, and this rate continues to rise in our country as it declines elsewhere around the globe.

**What is going on in the United States? Why are at least 700 new mothers dying each year?
Why has the rate of maternal mortality in the United States DOUBLED since 2000?**

The only way to answer these questions is to review each and every maternal death through statewide maternal mortality review committees (MMRCs), groups of maternal-child health experts and advocates who identify, review, and analyze maternal deaths and then disseminate information and act on the findings. Unfortunately, not all states have MMRCs, nor do the existing MMRCs gather data uniformly and consistently.

One of the leading causes of death for women in the first year after having a baby is SUICIDE. The United Kingdom and Japan both report suicide as the LEADING CAUSE of maternal mortality. Because we don't track this information in the United States, we are not sure of the suicide rate. But we know that postpartum depression and related mental health issues affect at least 1 in 5 women during pregnancy or first year postpartum. And we know that women like Shelane Gaydos, Allison Goldstein, and Brittany Butts (see next page for more about each of these lovely young mothers) are taking their lives. We need better systems to help these women and to identify why and how new mothers are dying.

Please vote for full funding of maternal mortality review committees in all 50 states.




Why? Because children need their mothers.

Sincerely,



Adrienne Griffen
Founder and Executive Director

Sample -- Maternal Deaths By Suicide

 <p>Shelane Dawn Gaydos 6/12/2015</p>	<p>Shelane was a strong, energetic, intelligent and warm woman. She had a hearty, infectious laugh and a bright smile. She was a loving and supportive wife to her husband, Brian, and a devoted mother to her three beautiful daughters, Nadia (7), Sofia (5) and Olivia (2). She truly lived for her girls and dedicated a lot of time and energy into making their lives extra special. On that beautiful sunny afternoon, after she made sure all the girls were safely at home and comfortable watching the T.V. she made an irreversible split minute decision to go into the next room, close the door and end her life.</p> <p><i>Shelane was a Fairfax County police officer. Her family launched Shelane's Run 5K and Kids Fun Run in 2016 to raise awareness about PMADs. Learn more at www.shelanesrun.org.</i></p>
 <p>Allison Mathews Goldstein 6/28/2016</p>	<p>No star shone brighter, no smile was sweeter than Allison Goldstein. She was a wonderful Mother, a devoted wife, and remarkable daughter and sister, a special aunt to two nephews and a niece, five cousins and countless friends. Amidst all the joy and love she shared with the world, Allison silently suffered from postpartum depression. Allison is survived by her loving husband, Maj. Justin Goldstein, and her infant daughter, Ainslee Parker.</p> <p><i>Allison's family has taken on the issue of maternal suicide through a foundation they launched named Allison's Reach and by speaking publicly and openly about their loss. Allison's story has been featured in local news outlets and shared worldwide via social media.</i></p>
 <p>Brittany Julianna Butt 11/12/2014</p>	<p>Brittany loved being on the sled running with her Siberian Huskies, or showing them in the conformation ring. Mother to her son Teige, with husband Jeff, she was aspiring to be a sports veterinarian. Brittany was the spark in the room that made lasting impressions with everyone. She was loved by her family and friends. Yet none of us really knew the depth of her despair or the many questions that would be left unanswered.</p> <p><i>Brittany's mother, Natalie Velasquez, participated in PMAD Advocacy Day in 2016. Natalie is a psychiatrist who lived in Northern Virginia for many years and now lives in Alaska.</i></p>