

MomsRising.org

Where moms and people who love them go to change our world

MomsRising HR 1318 Preventing Maternal Death Acts Hearing Testimony

Hello, my name is Smita Nadia Hussain. I am the Maternal Justice Campaign Director at MomsRising, a national organization of over a million members, with members in every state in the country, who organize and advocate around issues that impact mothers, children, and families. As Director of our Maternal Justice campaign, I work on grassroots organizing and advancing policy efforts to address the maternal mortality/morbidity issues in our country, concentrating on the disparities Black women experience. In fact, Black women, no matter their education or income level, are 3-4 time more likely to experience maternal mortality and morbidity, one of the widest disparities in all of women's health.

I urge you to move HR 1318 The Preventing Maternal Deaths Act forward in today's Subcommittee on Health hearing to enable this important piece of legislation to go to a vote by the House of Representatives.

Why is this legislation important? The ability to protect the health of mothers and babies in childbirth is a basic measure of a society's development. Yet, currently, the United States holds the worst record for maternal and infant mortality in the developed world, and maternal mortality continues to rise. Every year in the U.S., 700 to 900 women die from pregnancy or childbirth-related causes, and some 65,000 nearly die.

American women are more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications than women in 45 other countries including the United Kingdom and much poorer nations like Libya and Kazakhstan. Additionally the data reveal major racial disparities in maternal mortality rates: Black women are three to four times more likely to die from pregnancy complications than white women, independent of age, parity, or education in our nation.

This legislation would establish a program to help states review maternal deaths; establish and sustain a maternal mortality review committee; develop a plan for health care provider education to improve maternal care, and improve information collection on maternal deaths to provide public disclosure of information on maternal mortality. It will help enable health systems to address the factors leading to the disproportionate deaths of Black mothers and put recommendations in place to begin addressing racial disparities that have been present and unchanged for decades.

These are some of the critical solutions needed to address our nation's maternal mortality and morbidity crisis.

We can fix this; women don't have to die from childbirth. According to a recent analysis by the CDC Foundation, nearly 60 percent of maternal deaths in the U.S. are preventable. Sixty-percent. If we are able to decrease that number by even a fraction, thousands of mothers' lives could be saved.

At MomsRising, we have repeatedly heard the stories of women who've almost lost their lives and from those who've lost loved ones to childbirth related causes. Stories such as Carissa, from Olympia, WA.

“After 40 hours of labor and 6 hours pushing, [my daughter] was in fetal distress and I had to have an emergency c-section. If we hadn't had access to a good doctor, and appropriate care, we both would have died. As it is, she is my miracle, and I am so thankful we are here! Good prenatal care and access to the childbirth center are not optional. We live in the wealthiest country in history, and there is no excuse for moms and babies to die needlessly.”

We can and must do better to ensure that births are as safe and healthy as possible for all mothers. We must all work to ensure that the health of women and their children are made a priority. Thank you very much for your time.