

June 4, 2021

The Honorable Raphael G. Warnock  
U.S. Senate  
Dirksen Senate Office Building, Suite B40D  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roger W. Marshall  
U.S. Senate  
Russell Senate Office Building, Suite 479A  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Marco Rubio  
U.S. Senate  
284 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Margaret Wood Hassan  
U.S. Senate  
324 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tina Smith  
U.S. Senate  
720 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, MD  
U.S. Senate  
520 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Warnock, Rubio, Smith, Marshall, Hassan, and Cassidy:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am writing to express our support for S. 1675, the “Maternal Health Quality Improvement Act.” This legislation would provide grants to identify, develop, and disseminate best practices to improve maternal health care quality and outcomes. Additionally, provisions within this bill would encourage collaboration with state maternal mortality review committees to identify issues and reduce preventable maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity, promote perinatal quality collaborative activities, and implement integrated health care services for pregnant and postpartum women.

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 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 60 percent or more of these maternal deaths are preventable. Furthermore, CDC data show that Black and Indigenous women are three to four times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than White women.<sup>1</sup> As such, the Maternal Health Quality Improvement Act, which would ensure the dissemination of best shared practices and coordination among maternal mortality review committees to increase standardization of data collection and reporting, is greatly needed so that the U.S. can reduce the rate of maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity that face our nation’s mothers.

A growing body of research suggests that disparities within maternal mortality and morbidity remain even when controlling for education, income, and health. The Maternal Health Quality Act would address these disparities by supporting the training of clinicians on implicit bias and health equity issues. Recent studies have found that college-educated Black mothers who gave birth in local hospitals were more likely to suffer severe complications from pregnancy or childbirth than White women who did not complete high

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2019/p0905-racial-ethnic-disparities-pregnancy-deaths.html>

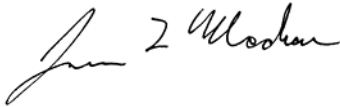
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school. This finding highlights the profound inequities within our medical system and the pressing need for implicit bias training. To ensure that there is an equitable approach to combatting bias in the clinical setting, this bill will direct the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to offer grants for implicit bias training for health care professionals.

As the country shifts our focus from battling the COVID-19 pandemic in U.S. hospitals to encouraging people to get the COVID-19 vaccines, we need to remember pregnant individuals in our policy discussions. This legislation would allow HHS to consider the importance of increasing awareness and knowledge of the safety and effectiveness of vaccines to prevent disease in pregnant and postpartum women and infants and emphasize the need to improve vaccination rates in communities and populations with low rates of vaccination.

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 Maternal Health Quality Improvement Act to improve maternal health in this country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim L Madara". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

James L. Madara, MD