



# Durbin, Kelly, Duckworth Introduce Momma Act to Reduce Maternal and Infant Mortality Rates

March 28 2019 10:10 AM

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and U.S. Representative Robin Kelly (D-IL02) today introduced the bicameral *Mothers and Offspring Mortality and Morbidity Awareness (MOMMA) Act*. The legislation seeks to reduce America’s rising maternal and infant mortality rate, especially for moms and babies of color who are significantly more likely to die during or shortly after pregnancy. On average, maternal mortality claims the lives of 700 American moms each year, with more than 60 percent of these deaths being preventable. Further, every year in the United States, more than 23,000 infants die, many due to factors that could have been prevented.

**“No nation as rich and advanced as the United States should have new moms and infants—especially women and babies of color—dying at the rates we are currently seeing. It is a national tragedy,”** Durbin said. **“Many of these deaths could have been prevented with the right interventions and health care. That’s why Congresswoman Kelly, Senator Duckworth, and I are introducing the *MOMMA Act* to help provide more comprehensive and culturally competent maternal and postpartum health care for all women and babies.”**

**“Mommas are dying across this country. Every year, we lose more mommas to rising rates of maternal mortality and it’s a sad fact that it’s more dangerous to have a baby today than it was 25 years ago,”** said Kelly. **“It’s past time to us to take simple, proven action that will save lives and ensure that all mommas get the chance to be mommas. I thank all of my colleagues, especially Senators Durbin and Duckworth, for leadership on this important issue.”**

**“It is absolutely unconscionable that, since I gave birth to Maile, hundreds of expectant and new moms are estimated to have died from preventable causes in**

**this country,” Duckworth said. “I’m proud to be leading this legislation alongside Representative Kelly and Senator Durbin to address our nation’s growing maternal mortality crisis, which disproportionately impacts women of color and those living in underserved or more rural areas. No more women should die from preventable causes on what should be the most special day of their lives.”**

The United States is one of only 13 countries in the world where the maternal mortality rate is worse now than it was 25 years ago. The shocking statistics cut across geography, education level, income, and socio-economic status. However, women and babies of color die at much higher rates than white mothers. Nationally, African American mothers die at 3-4 times the rate of white mothers, and black babies are twice as likely to die as white babies. Currently, the United States ranks 32<sup>nd</sup> out of the 35 wealthiest nations when it comes to infant mortality.

Maternal and infant mortality is especially important to Illinois families. According to the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), on average, 73 Illinois mothers die every year, with more than 70 percent of these deaths being deemed preventable. While Illinois’ maternal mortality rate is slightly lower than the national average, the disparity of black mothers dying is nearly double the national disparity. According to the IDPH, black mothers in Illinois die at 600 percent the rate of their white counterparts.

The *MOMMA Act* uses a five-pronged approach to address and reduce maternal deaths:

- Establishing national obstetric emergency protocols through a federal expert committee,
- Ensuring dissemination of best shared practices and coordination amongst maternal mortality review committees,
- Standardizing data collection and reporting,
- Improving access to culturally competent care throughout the care continuum, and
- Expanding Medicaid coverage to new mom’s entire post-partum period (1 year).

Along with Senators Durbin and Duckworth, the Senate bill was also co-sponsored by Senators Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Tina Smith (D-MN) and Angus King (I-ME).

U.S. Representatives Diana DeGette (CO), Karen Bass (CA), Jan Schakowsky (IL), Joe Kennedy III (MA), Ann M. Kuster (NH), Barbara Lee (CA), Bobby Rush (IL), Lisa Blunt Rochester (DE), Susan Davis (CA), Jamie Raskin (MD), Pete Aguilar (CA), Debbie Wasserman Schultz (FL), Earl Blumenauer (OR), Betty McCollum (MN),

Frederica Wilson (FL), Ro Khanna (IL), Alan Lowenthal (CA), Donald Payne, Jr. (NJ), Joyce Beatty (OH), Yvette Clarke (NY), Mike Quigley (IL), and Debbie Dingell (MI) are original co-sponsors in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The *MOMMA Act* has won the support of many professional medical associations, including the American Medical Association (AMA), National Medical Association (NMA), American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), National Association of Certified Professional Midwives (NACPM), Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses, American College of Nurse-Midwives, American College of Physicians (ACP), Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine, American Public Health Association and American Society for Reproductive Medicine.

Additionally, it has also won the endorsement of a numerous health and family advocates, including the March of Dimes, Black Women's Health Imperative, EverThrive Illinois, Families USA, Black Mamas Matter Alliance, First Focus Campaign for Children, National Partnership for Women & Families, Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs, The Preeclampsia Foundation, The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, Children's Dental Health Project, Every Mother Counts, PCOS Challenge: The National Polycystic Ovary Syndrome Association, Expecting Health at Genetic Alliance, The Tatia Oden French Memorial Foundation, Klamath Basin Oral Health Coalition, Power to Decide, National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health, Organization of Teratology Information Specialists, 2020 Mom, The HER Foundation, Maternal and Child Health Access, Patient Safety Movement Foundation, National Accreta Foundation, Arcora Foundation, National WIC Association, National Birth Equity Collaborative, MomsRising, WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease, Advocate Aurora Health, The Center for Reproductive Rights, 1,000 Days, Jon C. Burr Foundation, KinderSmile Foundation, Oral Health Kansas, Oral Health Nursing Education and Practice (OHNEP) and Heidi Murkoff, author of *What to Expect When You're Expecting*.