



Durbin Fights to Reduce Maternal and Infant Mortality Rates

March 28 2019 1:53 PM

WASHINGTON – In a speech on the Senate floor, U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) today urged his Senate colleagues to pass the *Mothers and Offspring Mortality and Morbidity Awareness (MOMMA) Act*, which he introduced in the Senate yesterday. 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.

“Twenty-three thousand infants and 700 new moms die each year in the United States. Some of the worst statistics in the world. We can prevent them with the screenings, interventions, and the right health care. I can think of no better way to help babies and mommas on a bipartisan basis to keep them alive and healthy, and that’s what the *MOMMA Act* would do,” Durbin said.

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 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 32nd out of the 35 wealthiest nations when it comes to infant mortality.

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).