

Durbin: If You Want to Reduce Infant and Maternal Death Rates, Pass The Momma Act

February 25 2020 4:42 PM



WASHINGTON – In a speech on the Senate floor, U.S. Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) today made a unanimous consent (UC) request to immediately pass his [*Mothers and Offspring Mortality and Morbidity Awareness \(MOMMA\) Act*](#). Durbin's 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—an additional 70,000 women suffer near-fatal health complications—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. Women and babies of color are particularly at risk—with African American women being three to four times more likely than white women to suffer pregnancy-related deaths, and African American babies being twice as likely as white babies to die in their first year of life. Senator Ben Sasse (R-NE) objected on behalf of Senate Republicans.

“Why don’t we do something affirmative to say we’re committed to mothers and children on a bipartisan basis regardless of our position on any other issue?”
Durbin asked.

Video of Durbin’s remarks on the Senate floor are available [here](#).

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Footage of Durbin’s remarks on the Senate floor is available [here](#) for TV Stations.

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. Further, the United States ranks 32nd out of the 35 wealthiest nations when it comes to infant mortality—with 23,000 babies born in the United States dying annually.

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).

The bill is supported by nearly 60 public health organizations, including the American Medical Association, March of Dimes, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the Black Women’s Health Imperative, the National Partnership for Women and Families, the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine, and the Black Mamas Matter Alliance.