



Attorney General Raoul Urges Congress To Pass The Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act Of 2021

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CHICAGO – Attorney General Kwame Raoul today led a coalition of 22 attorneys general urging Congress to pass the Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act of 2021. The legislation is aimed at combatting the high Black maternal mortality rate and increasing access to maternal and perinatal care.

As Mother’s Day approaches, Raoul and the coalition are highlighting the need to advance health equity across the country for all racial and ethnic minorities – especially Black mothers. Raoul and the coalition issued a letter today to Congressional leadership calling on Congress to pass H.R. 959, the Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act of 2021. This legislative package addresses the social determinants of the Black maternal mortality crisis, including improving access to housing, transportation and nutrition services.

“To effectively address and lower the high maternal mortality rates among minority women, Congress must review and confront the risk factors that increase the chances of fatalities,” Raoul said. “The Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act of 2021 will provide support and funding that will allow health care and community organizations to provide comprehensive help to pregnant and post-natal women, ensuring that they and their children have access to doctors and other medical professionals who can diagnose and treat health complications before they become life-threatening.”

The Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act of 2021 is co-sponsored by Rep. Lauren Underwood (IL-14) and other members of the Black Maternal Health Caucus.

“I would like to thank Attorney General Raoul and attorneys general across the United States for their support of the Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act,” said Underwood. “In Illinois, Black mothers are approximately three times as likely to die from

pregnancy-related complications as white mothers, and 83 percent of all maternal deaths in our state are preventable. We need to take bold action to save lives and end disparities in Illinois and across the country. I'm leading the Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act in Congress to comprehensively improve maternal health outcomes through investments that will address social determinants of health, fund community-based organizations, grow and diversify the perinatal workforce, and improve data collection. The strength of the coalition of support for this legislation to address the Black maternal health crisis shows that we can save moms' lives, end racial disparities, and achieve true justice for Black moms and all birthing people. I look forward to working with our nation's attorneys general, my colleagues in Congress and the Biden-Harris Administration to get this legislation signed into law."

The Momnibus is intended to help decrease maternal mortality among Black mothers, who die at a rate three to four times higher than white mothers. Similarly, Native American, Asian-American and Pacific Islander, and Hispanic women are more likely to face maternal mortality than white women and non-Hispanic women. As the White House announced on April 13, "quality, equitable healthcare is a right, not a privilege." However, many risk factors play into increased rates of maternal mortality, including preexisting conditions, socioeconomic status, lack of health insurance, and implicit bias and discrimination in health care.

The Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act of 2021 addresses maternal mortality by ensuring women have access to equitable care at all stages of pregnancy. The legislative package is comprised of 12 bills that address the crisis through a multifaceted approach of increased grant funding, enhanced data collection and improving community programs. By specifically addressing the social determinants of health, the package aims to reduce maternal mortality by providing funding to community-based maternal health organizations; diversifying the perinatal workforce; supporting mothers and improving maternal health care for individuals with mental health conditions, substance abuse disorders, and those who are incarcerated; enhancing postpartum care; and promoting maternal health innovation such as telehealth, maternal vaccinations, and payment options from pregnancy through the postpartum period.

If passed, the policy changes would benefit individual state programs by increasing funding, furthering access to community supports and enhancing education services for mothers. More broadly, the legislation would assist state attorneys general in working to protect residents against race-based discrimination within the health care system.

Joining Raoul in calling on Congress to pass the Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act of 2021 are the attorneys general of Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of

Columbia, Hawaii, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin.