



Duckworth's Bipartisan Protecting Moms Who Served Act Passes Senate

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Although women are projected to be the fastest-growing group within the Veteran community, little is known about adverse maternal health outcomes among women Veterans.

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Bipartisan legislation introduced by U.S. Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and Susan Collins (R-ME) and U.S. Representative Lauren

Underwood (D-IL-14) that would help address the maternal mortality crisis among women Veterans passed the U.S. Senate yesterday and is now headed to the U.S. House of Representatives. *Protecting Moms Who Served Act* would commission the first-ever comprehensive study on the scope of America's maternal health crisis among women Veterans—with a focus on racial and ethnic disparities on maternal health outcomes—while also supporting maternal care coordination programs at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities. There are more than half a million women Veterans in our nation who are under the age of 40. Duckworth, a member of the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee, is a combat Veteran who served in the Reserve Forces for 23 years.

“It’s a tragedy every time a mother dies from a preventable cause related to pregnancy or childbirth, and it’s shameful that far too often those moms are women of color whose pain or symptoms have been overlooked or ignored,” said Duckworth. “There has never been a comprehensive evaluation of how our nation’s growing maternal mortality crisis is impacting our women Veterans, even though they may be at higher risk due to their service. I’m so proud that this bipartisan bill I introduced with Senator Collins and Representative Underwood—which would commission the first-ever comprehensive study on this issue in relation to the Veteran community while also making sure mothers who have served our nation can access the maternal care they need and have earned—passed the Senate.”

“Providing support to our veterans and those who serve today is among our greatest obligations. The U.S. has an unacceptably high maternal mortality rate, and the impact of this crisis on women veterans is not well understood,” said Collins. “Our legislation would help examine ways to improve care coordination, identify gaps in coverage, and eliminate disparities. I’m pleased that the Senate has passed this critical bill to help ensure that the brave women who have served in our military receive the maternal care they have earned.”

“The U.S. suffers unacceptable rates of preventable maternal mortality, and veterans are uniquely at-risk. With the Protecting Moms Who Served Act, we can make sure that the Department of Veterans Affairs provides the highest quality maternal health care and support for moms who have served,” said Underwood. “I’m so thrilled to see the first bill in my Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act pass the Senate. I am thankful for the partnership of Senators Duckworth and Collins on this bipartisan effort, and I look forward to seeing this critical legislation to save moms’ lives pass the House and get signed into law.”

Specifically, the *Protecting Moms Who Served Act* would:

- Invest \$15 million in maternity care coordination programs at VA facilities that would help:

- o Ensure effective coordination between VA facilities and non-VA facilities in the delivery of maternity care and other healthcare services
- o Facilitate access and referrals to resources in the community to address social determinants of health
- o Identify mental and behavioral health risk factors in the prenatal and postpartum periods, and ensure that pregnant and postpartum Veterans get the help and treatment they need; and
- o Offer childbirth preparation classes, parenting classes, nutrition counselling, breastfeeding support, lactation classes and breast pumps.
- Commission a comprehensive GAO study, submitted to Congress, on maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity among Veterans, with a particular focus on racial and ethnic disparities in maternal health outcomes that would:
- o Make recommendations for the improvement of maternal health data collection processes;
- o Include steps on how to reduce adverse maternal health outcomes among Veterans, including those with coverage through the VA, their employers or other private insurance plans, Tricare or Medicaid, as well as uninsured Veterans.

Duckworth recently worked with U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) to [secure](#) a provision in the American Rescue Plan that gives states a five-year option to extend healthcare coverage for new moms on Medicaid from 60 days after pregnancy to a full year. The provision was based off of legislation that Duckworth, Durbin and U.S. Representative Robin Kelly (D-IL-02) [introduced](#) last Congress that sought to reduce America's rising maternal and infant mortality rate.

This Congress, Duckworth joined U.S. Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) and U.S. Representatives Lauren Underwood (D-IL-14) and Alma Adams (D-NC-12) in [unveiling](#) the *Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act*, which includes a series of 12 bills to help save moms' lives, end racial and ethnic disparities in maternal health outcomes and achieve maternal health justice. Duckworth also joined Booker and U.S. Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ) in [introducing](#) a resolution recognizing Black Maternal Health Week, "to bring national attention to the maternal health crisis in the United States and the importance of reducing maternal mortality and morbidity among Black women and birthing persons."

The *Protecting Moms Who Served Act* has been endorsed by over 150 organizations, including: American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists; Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses; NAACP; Society for Women's Health Research; Women Veterans Interactive; and Wounded Warrior Project.