



Duckworth's Bipartisan Protecting Moms Who Served Act Signed Into Law

November 30 2021 2:51 PM



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. – U.S. Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and Susan Collins (R-ME) and U.S. Representative Lauren Underwood (D-IL-14) joined President Biden at

the White House today as he signed their bipartisan *Protecting Moms Who Served Act* into law to help address the maternal mortality crisis among women Veterans by helping improve care at VA facilities and shed light on the scope of this crisis, particularly among women of color. 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. Photos from today's bill signing ceremony can be found [here](#) and video can be found [here](#).

"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 these moms are women of color whose pain or symptoms have been overlooked or ignored," said Duckworth. "I'm so proud that President Biden signed this bipartisan bill I introduced with Senator Collins and Representative Underwood—which would help address our nation's growing maternal mortality crisis by helping ensure the pregnancy complications of all women Veterans are not overlooked or ignored—into law today."

"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. "This legislation Senator Duckworth and I partnered on will help examine ways to improve care coordination, identify gaps in coverage, and eliminate disparities. Now that our bill has been signed into law, the U.S. can 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; we must ensure that the VA is providing the highest-quality maternal health care and support to moms who served," said Underwood. "I am thrilled to see the President sign the Protecting Moms Who Served Act into law, a bipartisan bill that Senator Duckworth and I introduced to improve maternal health outcomes among veterans. I thank my colleagues who joined me to introduce this bill, including House Veterans' Affairs Health Subcommittee Chairwoman Julia Brownley and Representatives Gus Bilirakis and Brian Fitzpatrick, and I look forward to passing the Build Back Better Act so we can continue to save moms' lives."

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

- **Invest \$15 million in maternity care coordination programs at VA facilities that would help:**
 - Ensure effective coordination between VA facilities and non-VA facilities in the delivery of maternity care and other healthcare services;

- Facilitate access and referrals to resources in the community to address social determinants of health;
- 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
- Offer childbirth preparation classes, parenting classes, nutrition counselling, breastfeeding support, lactation classes and breast pumps.
- **Commission the first-ever 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:**
 - Make recommendations for the improvement of maternal health data collection processes;
 - 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.

The *Protecting Moms Who Served Act* is the first bill in the *Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act* to be signed into law. Earlier this year, 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, including the *Protecting Moms Who Served Act*, to help save moms' lives, end racial and ethnic disparities in maternal health outcomes and achieve maternal health justice.

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) re-[introduced](#) earlier this year that seeks to reduce America's rising maternal and infant mortality rate.

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.

