

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. RES. _____

Recognizing the week of April 11 through April 17, 2020, as “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.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Ms. HARRIS submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on _____

RESOLUTION

Recognizing the week of April 11 through April 17, 2020, as “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.

Whereas, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Black women in the United States are 3 to 4 times more likely than White women to die from pregnancy-related causes;

Whereas Black women in the United States suffer from life-threatening pregnancy complications, known as “maternal morbidities”, twice as often as White women;

Whereas maternal mortality rates in the United States are—

- (1) among the highest in the developed world; and
- (2) increasing rapidly;

Whereas the United States has the highest maternal mortality rate among affluent countries, in part because of the disproportionate mortality rate of Black women;

Whereas Black women are 49 percent more likely than all other women to deliver prematurely;

Whereas the high rates of maternal mortality among Black women span across—

- (1) income levels;
- (2) education levels; and
- (3) socioeconomic status;

Whereas structural racism, gender oppression, and the social determinants of health inequities experienced by Black women in the United States significantly contribute to the disproportionately high rates of maternal mortality and morbidity among Black women;

Whereas racism and discrimination play a consequential role in maternal health care experiences and outcomes;

Whereas a fair distribution of resources, especially with regard to reproductive health care services and maternal health programming, is critical to closing the maternal health racial disparity gap;

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic is disparately affecting the Black community and has further amplified existing health care inequities in the United States, exacerbating the Black maternal health crisis;

Whereas, even as there is growing concern about improving access to mental health services, Black women are least likely to have access to mental health screenings, treatment, and support before, during, and after pregnancy;

Whereas justice-informed, culturally congruent models of care are beneficial to Black women; and

Whereas an investment must be made in—

(1) maternity care for Black women and birthing persons, including support of care led by the communities most affected by the maternal health crisis in the United States; and

(2) policies that support and promote affordable, comprehensive, and holistic maternal health care that is free from gender and racial discrimination: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate recognizes—

2 (1) that Black women are experiencing high,
3 disproportionate rates of maternal mortality and
4 morbidity in the United States;

5 (2) that the alarmingly high rates of maternal
6 mortality among Black women are unacceptable;

7 (3) that, in order to better mitigate the effects
8 of systemic and structural racism, Congress must
9 work toward ensuring that the Black community
10 has—

11 (A) adequate housing;

12 (B) transportation equity;

13 (C) nutritious food;

14 (D) clean water;

15 (E) environments free from toxins;

16 (F) fair treatment within the criminal jus-
17 tice system;

1 (G) safety and freedom from violence;

2 (H) a living wage;

3 (I) equal economic opportunity; and

4 (J) comprehensive, quality, and affordable
5 health care;

6 (4) that, in order to improve maternal health
7 outcomes, Congress must fully support and encour-
8 age policies grounded in the human rights and re-
9 productive justice frameworks that address Black
10 maternal health inequity;

11 (5) that Black women and birthing persons
12 must be active participants in the policy decisions
13 that impact their lives;

14 (6) that Black Maternal Health Week is an op-
15 portunity—

16 (A) to raise national awareness of the state
17 of Black maternal health in the United States;

18 (B) to amplify the voices of Black women
19 and birthing persons, families, and commu-
20 nities;

21 (C) to serve as a national platform for—

22 (i) entities led by Black women; and

23 (ii) efforts on maternal health; and

24 (D) to enhance community organizing on
25 Black maternal health; and

1 (7) the significance of April 11 through April
2 17, 2020, as “Black Maternal Health Week”.