



Senator Holly J. Mitchell

SB 464 – Dignity in Pregnancy and Childbirth Act

THIS BILL

SB 464 will require all hospitals and alternative birth centers in California to provide evidence-based implicit bias training to all healthcare providers involved in perinatal services. The bill will also require the California Department of Public Health to track and publish maternal mortality and morbidity rates, including information about the underlying causes and the racial or ethnic demographics of patients. Finally, the bill will adopt the U.S. standard death certificate format regarding pregnancy to better capture information about maternal mortality.

PROBLEM

With 700 women who die each year from childbirth, and another 50,000 who suffer from severe complications, the United States has the highest maternal mortality rate in the developed world. In California, the rate of maternal mortality has decreased 55% since 2006. However, for Black women, the maternal mortality rate remains 3 to 4 times higher than white women. Although Black women make up only 5% of the birth cohort in California, they comprise 21% of the pregnancy-related deaths.

Unlike with other health disparities, socioeconomic status, access to prenatal care, education level, and general physical health do not explain the disparity seen in Black women's maternal mortality and morbidity rate. In fact, middle to high-income Black mothers have worse birthing outcomes than white women in abject poverty. Furthermore, Black women who are non-smokers have worse birthing outcomes than white women who smoke a cigarette every day. Evidence points to implicit bias as one of the causes for the wide disparities seen between Black women's maternal mortality numbers and other ethnicity groups. In fact, a 2016 study by University of Virginia researchers found that white medical students believed biological myths about racial differences in patients, including that Black patients have less sensitive nerve endings, are able to tolerate more pain, and have thicker skin than their white counterparts.

SOLUTION

The Dignity in Pregnancy and Childbirth Act aims to reduce pregnancy-related preventable deaths, severe illnesses and associated health disparities by addressing implicit bias among perinatal health providers. The training program will task medical professionals to identify and correct any previously or current unconscious or conscious biases and misinformation. They will also address personal, interpersonal, institutional, structural, and cultural barriers to access to health care.

Additionally, by aligning CA death certificate formats with the federal standards, which specify whether the decedent was pregnant at death or within 42 -365 days of death, the California Department of Public Health can resume collecting and publishing data on maternal mortality and severe morbidity.

By preparing perinatal medical providers to better care for mothers in some of the most vulnerable moments in their lives, SB 464 will preserve lives so that childbirth remains a joyful moment for all mothers, and not a life-threatening event for Black mothers.

California has plenty of reasons to celebrate the recent downward trend in maternal deaths, but we cannot afford to celebrate that trend until it is fully inclusive and all women are benefitting from the important changes in our health care system.

SUPPORT

ACT for Women and Girls (Sponsor)

Black Women for Wellness (Sponsor)

California Nurse Midwives Association (Sponsor)

NARAL Pro Choice California (Sponsor)

Western Center on Law & Poverty (Sponsor)

Academy of Lactation Policy and Practice

Alliance of Californians for Community

Empowerment (ACCE) Action

Asian Americans Advancing Justice Los Angeles

Asian Pacific Policy & Planning Council

Bay Area Regional Health Inequities Initiative
Black American Political Association of California
Breastfeed LA
California Asian Pacific Chamber of Commerce
California Association of Licensed Midwives
California Black Health Network
California Black Women's Health Project
California Health + Advocates
California Hospital Association
California Latinas for Reproductive Justice
California Legislative Black Caucus
California Legislative Women's Caucus
California Pan Ethnic Health Network
California Physician Alliance
California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation
Center on Reproductive Rights & Justice
Child Care Law Center
Children and Families Commission of Los Angeles
County
Children's Collective, Inc.
Children's Defense Fund- California
Children Now
Citizens for Choice
Coalition of California Welfare Rights
Organizations
Coalition of Orange County Community Health
Centers
Community Health Councils
Consumer Watchdog
County Health Executives Association of California
Courage Campaign
Feminist Majority Foundation
Fields Family Counseling Services
First 5 LA
Friends Committee on Legislation of California
Harbor UCLA Medical Center
Having Our Say Coalition
Health Access California
If/When/How: Lawyering for Reproductive Justice
Indivisible CA: StateStrong
In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's
Reproductive Justice Agenda
Legal Services for Prisoners with Children
Los Angeles Black Worker Center
Los Angeles City Council Office of Marqueece
Harris-Dawson
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
Maternal Mental Health Now
MomsRising
National Association of Social Workers – California
National Coalition of 100 Black Women –
Sacramento Chapter

National Council of Jewish Women California
National Health Law Program
Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles
County
New Voices for Reproductive Justice
Option House, Inc.
Physicians for Social Responsibility Los Angeles
Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California
Praxis Project
San Francisco City and County Board of
Supervisors
The Children's Clinic
Therapeutic Play Foundation
UC Berkeley Law Center on Reproductive Rights
and Justice
United Steelworkers Local 675
Women's Foundation of California
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