



Black Maternal Health Caucus

U.S. House of Representatives
1118 Longworth House Office Building
Washington D.C. 20515

July 20, 2020

Dear Congresswomen Adams and Underwood:

Thank you for your leadership in addressing the crisis of maternal health inequities and their structural drivers, as well as engaging in a thoughtful, action-oriented conversation about policy solutions with an inclusive community. Thank you also for including March for Moms as a participant in this discussion – we are honored, and humbled.

March for Moms is a non-partisan, solution-oriented nonprofit that advocates for the best possible health and well-being of all mothers and birthing people. We work across a broad coalition of consumer and family, professional, policymaker and industry representatives to align and amplify advocacy strategies to ensure that every American family can grow with dignity, including holding an annual community rally and week of advocacy around Mother's Day.

In addition to supporting the development of the Momnibus as a stakeholder, we have engaged in active advocacy (within the constraints of being a 501(c)3) for the nine bills as well as the policy concepts they promote over the past year. As part of our Mother's Day 2020 week of advocacy, we organized [a call to action campaign](#) in partnership with Every Mother Counts that demanded policy action to support pregnant, childbearing and postpartum people in the response to COVID-19 given the unique issues they are facing as a result of the pandemic. We've had over 3,000 letters sent to state and Federal leaders as part of the campaign. Aligned with the goals of the Momnibus and centering the needs of Black and brown people explicitly, the letters called for action on four policy concepts:

- 1) Ensuring that women do not lose their health coverage too soon after giving birth by permanently extending pregnancy-related Medicaid to cover new moms for one year postpartum,
- 2) Making safe, virtual care available to families for prenatal and postpartum health care, including mental health,
- 3) Improving access to midwifery care and community birth options, and
- 4) Expanding access to community-based doulas, peer childbirth educators, and peer counselors to provide essential emotional and informational support to families during this time of crisis.

Looking ahead, March for Moms offers three intersectional policy priority areas for your consideration. First, [given the demonstrated impact that coverage and access have on maternal health outcomes for Black women](#), we need Medicaid reform. Beyond ensuring that the Affordable Care Act coverage and benefit protections remain in place, we encourage extending Medicaid coverage for all eligible women to one year postpartum. To balance the increased costs of a coverage extension, it must be coupled with Medicaid financing changes to ensure that states



can pay for the preventative community-based services for families in the prenatal and postpartum periods such as doula services, more postpartum visits and home visiting programs that [have proven to reduce costly hospital utilization](#). Second and related, particularly for Black women, supporting and scaling evidence-based, integrated, community-led care models that predominantly use a midwifery model of care with seamless coordination to primary care, OB-GYN specialists and behavioral health care. We need Medicaid and commercial payers alike to use value-based payment models that are appropriately risk-adjusted to allow providers to deliver comprehensive services across social, medical and behavioral needs for moms at scale, and not just as grant-funded pilots. Lastly, we must improve our available maternal mortality data sources. We rely heavily on the state and city Maternal Mortality Review Committees for data-driven solutions to reduce the burden of maternal mortality in the U.S. However, despite coordinated technical assistance provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there is substantial variation in the function, composition, and transparency of these committees across states. We must hold these committees accountable to uniform guidelines in order to yield higher quality data and to better reflect the needs of the communities most impacted by this issue.

We look forward to working collaboratively with all the stakeholders in attendance at the Listening Session to develop an aligned policy agenda that is centered on the experiences of Black moms and families across the United States of America. We are happy to be a resource to you, the Caucus, and your staff as you continue to explore solutions to this issue that sits at the heart of who we are as a country and society.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Shea Barrett".

Katie Shea Barrett, MPH
Executive Director
March for Moms