

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 12, 2019

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As the Subcommittee begins consideration of the fiscal year (FY) 2020 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies appropriations bill, we write to respectfully request that you include funding and report language that will work to address a pressing public health issue: the rising rate of maternal mortality in the United States.

Maternal mortality is often considered an important indicator of the quality of a nation's health care system and the nation's health status, overall.¹ Unfortunately, more women in the United States die of pregnancy-related complications than in any other developed nation.² Furthermore, while the maternal mortality rate in other countries has been declining over time, in the United States, it has increased. In 2000, there were 18.8 deaths per 100,000 live births, and in 2014, there were 23.8 deaths per 100,000 live births – an increase of 26 percent.³ There is no acceptable rate of maternal mortality, but these statistics are all the more concerning given that an estimated 60 percent of maternal deaths are preventable.⁴ And sadly, stark disparities in maternal deaths exist. The maternal mortality rate among black women is nearly four times as much as that of white women, and the maternal mortality rate among American Indian and Alaska Native women is nearly double that of white women.^{5,6}

Accurate data collection is imperative for preventing maternal deaths, eliminating disparities, and informing future policy decisions to address this public health concern. In 34 states, Maternal Mortality Review Committees (MMRCs) are leading this effort, and nine more states are in the process of standing up an MMRC. Comprised of local public health professionals and experts, MMRCs review individual maternal deaths to understand their causes and help identify

¹Bouvier-Colle, M-H et al. "What about the Mothers? An Analysis of Maternal Mortality and Morbidity in Perinatal Health Surveillance Systems in Europe." *BJOG*. 2012.

²Martin, Nina. "U.S. Has The Worst Rate of Maternal Deaths in the Developed World." *NPR*. 2017.

³MacDorman, Marian F. et al. "Is the United States Maternal Mortality Rate Increasing? Disentangling Trends from Measurement Issues Short Title: U.S. Maternal Mortality Trends." *Obstetrics and Gynecology*. 2016.

⁴Building U.S. Capacity to Review and Prevent Maternal Deaths, "Report From Nine Maternal Mortality Review Committees." (2018)

⁵Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Pregnancy Mortality Surveillance System," <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternalinfanthealth/pmss.html>.

⁶Indian Health Service, "Trends in Indian Health: 2014 Edition," https://www.ihs.gov/dps/includes/themes/responsive2017/display_objects/documents/Trends2014Book508.pdf

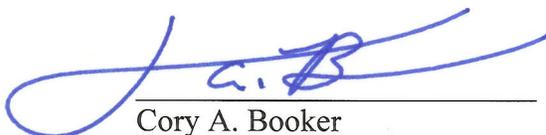
solutions to prevent these tragic outcomes.⁷ By investing in MMRCs, Congress can help improve the health and well-being of pregnant women and save families from devastating losses. Therefore, we respectfully request that you include \$12 million for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to provide technical assistance, through the Safe Motherhood and Infant Health Program, to state MMRCs and to support data collection and data-driven action.

To turn data from state MMRCs into action, the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) at the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) has invested in the Alliance for Innovation on Maternal Health (AIM) – a program that works with states and hospital systems to implement evidence-based toolkits, or bundles, to improve maternal outcomes. The AIM program has bundles on a range of important maternal safety topics including obstetric hemorrhage, severe hypertension in pregnancy, maternal mental health, obstetric care for women with opioid use disorder, and reduction of peripartum racial and ethnic disparities.⁸ Data from participating hospitals in four states that were the first to join AIM and were implementing the hemorrhage and hypertension bundles in 2015 indicated an overall 20 percent decrease in the severe maternal morbidity rate in the first two years of participation.⁹ This is important because improvements in severe maternal morbidity have a direct impact on the rate of maternal mortality. Therefore, we urge the Subcommittee to support the inclusion of the following language in the report accompanying the FY 2020 appropriations bill:

The Alliance for Innovation on Maternal Health —The Committee includes \$5,000,000 within SPRANS to support continued implementation of the Alliance for Innovation on Maternal Health Program's maternal safety bundles to all U.S. States, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories, as well as tribal entities. Maternal safety bundles are a set of targeted and evidence-based best practices that, when implemented, improve patient outcomes and reduce maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and your work to combat the rising rate of maternal mortality and eliminate preventable maternal deaths in the United States.

Sincerely,



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

⁷ Building U.S. Capacity to Review and Prevent Maternal Deaths, “Report from Maternal Mortality Review Committees: A View Into Their Critical Role.” (2017)

⁸ Council on Patient Safety in Women’s Health Care, “AIM-Supported Patient Safety Bundles,” <http://safehealthcareforeverywoman.org/aim-supported-patient-safety-bundles/>

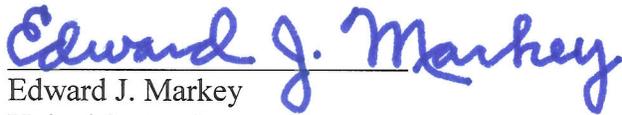
⁹ ACOG, “National Initiative Aimed at Reducing Maternal Deaths Shows Early Signs of Improvement in Severe Maternal Morbidity.” (2018) <https://www.acog.org/About-ACOG/News-Room/News-Releases/2017/National-Initiative-Aimed-at-Reducing-Maternal-Deaths>



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



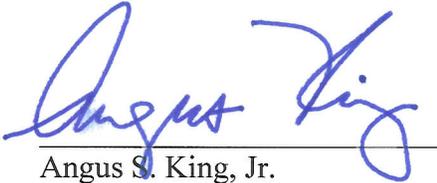
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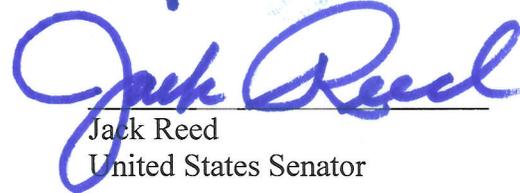
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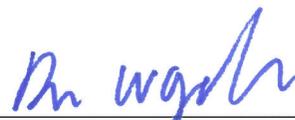
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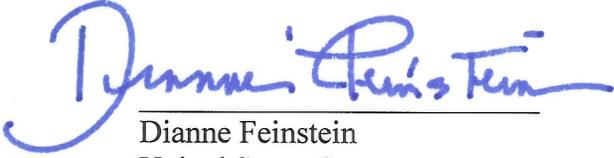
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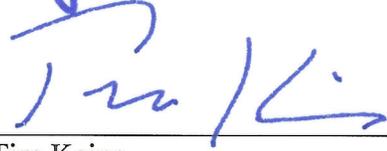
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Kyrsten Sinema
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Dianne Feinstein
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