

TALKING POINTS

Black Maternal Health Mominibus Act

National Council of Jewish Women's (NCJW) Message

For more than a century, National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) has been at the forefront of social change for women, children, and families. NCJW works to ensure that childbirth is safer for anyone who gives birth. No mother or pregnant person should have their life cut short in pregnancy or childbirth because of poor or inadequate care. And they should have essential resources to enable their families to flourish.

Unfortunately, the US is experiencing a maternal and reproductive health care crisis. Despite being the richest nation in the world, we hold the grim distinction of the highest maternal death rate amongst developed nations, with Black moms dying of pregnancy complications at nearly three times the rate of their white counterparts.¹ These disparities have only worsened with abortion bans and restrictions enacted around the country since the Supreme Court's decision in 2022 in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*. Congressional leaders in the Black Maternal Health Caucus are working to combat this devastating public health emergency through the **Black Maternal Health Mominibus Act of 2023 (H.R. 3305/S. 1606)**. Passing this important legislation, introduced in the Senate by Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) and in the House by Representatives Lauren Underwood (D-IL) and Alma Adams (D-NC), is the necessary next step to protect Black women and all people who can give birth in this country.

¹ Munira Z. Gunja, Evan D. Gumas, Relebohile Masitha, and Laurie C. Zephyrin, "Insights into the U.S. Maternal Mortality Crisis: An International Comparison," The Commonwealth Fund, June 4, 2024, <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2024/jun/insights-us-maternal-mortality-crisis-international-comparison#:~:text=Recent%20Maternal%20Mortality%20Trends,deaths%20per%20100%2C000%20live%20births.>

- **The Jewish value of Achrayut, or social responsibility, morally obligates us** to protect every single person’s health, and to right injustices that currently exist. As Jews, we have a duty to work toward equality for everyone. Safe, equitable, affordable healthcare is a right, not a privilege. NCJW is committed to racial justice and supports The Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act of 2023 because of the incredible change it will make in the lives of many.
- **The Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act** is a comprehensive, bold initiative to address the tragic health disparities faced by people of color who give birth. The Momnibus comprises 13 crucial bills that address every dimension of the maternal health crisis in America, including expanding nutritional programs for women and infants, increasing and diversifying maternal healthcare workers to cover the swaths of maternity care deserts, and improving data collection regarding maternal care.
- **The Momnibus will make giving birth safer for Black and Brown people and all who give birth by addressing the medical, non-medical, and social causes that contribute to such high rates of maternal mortality.** The general US maternal mortality rate of 22 deaths per 100,000 live births, and 49 deaths per 100,000 live births for black women, is unacceptable.² Far too many mothers and people giving birth are dying. No other high income nation fares as badly. This legislation makes investments that address every driver of maternal mortality.
- **The Momnibus will improve how we collect data around maternal health to fuel further evidence-based solutions.** A key to any problem is fully understanding it. To improve maternal mortality rates, we need a deeper understanding of its root causes. In the US, maternal health data is currently fragmented, incomplete, not standardized, and insufficient. This legislation would make investments in data collection processes to advance evidence-based solutions.

² Ibid.

- **The Momnibus would extend eligibility for the Women and Infant Care program, providing newborns with access to critical food and nutrition programs.** The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) helps provide food for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum people and serves about 40% of all infants in the US.³ WIC improves the dietary intake of pregnant and postpartum women and improves weight gain in pregnant women. Access to WIC benefits is associated with reduced infant mortality, improved nutrition and health outcomes, and a lower risk of low-birthweight infants.⁴
- **The Momnibus would provide funding to community-based organizations and veterans maternity care programs, as well as grow and diversify the pool of maternal healthcare workers.** The challenges faced by those giving birth vary highly by community. For instance, many people giving birth in communities of color experience racism or receive care that is culturally insensitive and too frequently deadly, and veterans often experience multiple conditions affecting their pregnancies such as preeclampsia and gestational diabetes resulting from post traumatic stress disorder.⁵ Investing in community-based organizations and diversifying those who work in maternal and perinatal health can help to address bias, racism, and discrimination in maternity care and ensure that individuals receive excellent and appropriate care for their circumstances.

The National Council of Jewish Women supports the swift passage of the Momnibus Act to end the maternal health crisis and protect mothers everywhere.

³ USDA Food and Nutrition Service, “Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC),” US Department of Agriculture, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic>

⁴ USDA Food and Nutrition Service, “About WIC: How WIC Helps,” US Department of Agriculture, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/about-wic-how-wic-helps>

⁵ Codie Kesler, MPH(c), Office of Health Equity, Lauren Korshak, DHealth(c), MS, RCEP, Office of Health Equity, Jodie G. Katon, PhD, MS VA Puget Sound Health Care System, and Amanda Johnson, MD, “Women Veteran and Pregnancy Complications,” US Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Health Equity, https://www.va.gov/HEALTHY/Women_Veterans_and_Pregnancy_Complications.asp