

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 21, 2022

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer,

We are grateful for your ongoing commitment to addressing the maternal health crisis in the United States, including as a cosponsor and vocal champion of landmark legislation to save moms' lives and advance birth equity. As Senate Democrats negotiate reconciliation legislation, we urge you to ensure that the critical maternal health equity investments in the House-passed package are included in full in the final package. Specifically, we write to express our strong support for Sections 30721-30722 and 31031-31048 of the Build Back Better Act that passed the House of Representatives on November 19, 2021. In total, these provisions cost approximately \$4 billion – a fraction of a percent of the overall package – yet the impact would be significant,¹ and the need could not be more urgent.

As you know, the United States has the highest maternal mortality rate of any high-income country and the only rate that is rising. The pregnancy-related mortality rate for Black and Native Americans is two to four times higher than the rate for white Americans,² and Hispanic and AAPI people also experience elevated rates of maternal mortality and morbidity.³ These trends could worsen due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has put pregnant people at greater risk for adverse birth outcomes.⁴

Recognizing the pressing need to address these alarming trends, the House-passed Build Back Better Act included historic investments eliminate preventable maternal mortality and end racial and ethnic maternal health disparities. The legislation:

- Makes federal funds permanently available for states to spend on expanded postpartum Medicaid and CHIP coverage to one year in every state with full state plan benefits, a life-saving provision⁵ that the Biden-Harris Administration has identified as a key

¹ Jamila Taylor & Anna Bernstein: *Four Ways the Build Back Better Act Could Improve Black Maternal Health*. October 20, 2021.

² National Institutes of Health Office of Research on Women's Health: *Maternal Morbidity and Mortality*. 2019.

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: *Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Pregnancy-Related Deaths — United States, 2007–2016*. September 6, 2019.

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: *Investigating the Impact of COVID-19 during Pregnancy*. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/special-populations/pregnancy-data-on-covid-19/what-cdc-is-doing.html>. Accessed June 4, 2021.

⁵ Taylor et al.: *We Must Extend Postpartum Medicaid Coverage*. March 11, 2021.

strategy to promote continuity of coverage and mitigate churn in state Medicaid programs at the end of the COVID-19 public health emergency.⁶

- Makes federal funds available for states to provide coordinated maternity care through maternal health homes under Medicaid.
- Provides \$175 million in funding for local entities to address social determinants of maternal health like housing, nutrition, and environmental conditions – including a minimum of \$75 million exclusively for community-based organizations working to promote maternal health equity.
- Provides \$295 million to grow and diversify the perinatal health workforce, including nurses, midwives, physicians, doulas, and maternal mental and behavioral health professionals – including \$50 million specifically for doulas.
- Provides \$100 million for maternal mental health equity grant programs.
- Provides \$85 million to address the impacts of climate change-related maternal and infant health risks through health professional schools.
- Provides \$50 million to advance maternal health research at Minority-Serving Institutions like Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and AAPIs.
- Provides \$50 million to promote representative community engagement in Maternal Mortality Review Committees.
- Provides \$210 million to strengthen federal maternal health programs like the CDC’s Surveillance for Emerging Threats to Mothers and Babies program, Enhancing Reviews and Surveillance to Eliminate Maternal Mortality (ERASE MM), Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS), Perinatal Quality Collaboratives, and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD).
- Provides \$60 million to expand access to maternal health equity digital tools.
- Provides \$50 million for bias trainings among health care professionals.

These evidence-based investments center the families most severely impacted by our nation’s maternal health crisis, and the provisions were shaped by women of color and local organizations that are on the ground in communities across the country, doing urgently important work to support pregnant people and new parents.

On December 7, 2021, Vice President Harris hosted the first-ever White House Maternal Health Day of Action at the White House to call attention to the need to pass the Build Back Better Act with these maternal health provisions included – provisions that the Vice President championed during her time in the Senate. In issuing a *Call to Action to Reduce Maternal Mortality and Morbidity*, the Administration laid out how the reconciliation package will “expand access to maternal care and make unprecedented new investments to drive down mortality and morbidity,”

⁶ Department of Health & Human Services: *SHO# 22-001 RE: Promoting Continuity of Coverage and Distributing Eligibility and Enrollment Workload in Medicaid, the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and Basic Health Program (BHP) Upon Conclusion of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency*. March 3, 2022

and affirmed that “President Biden and Vice President Harris call on the Senate to swiftly pass [the reconciliation package], and make these reforms a reality for America’s families.”⁷

To fulfill the Biden-Harris Administration’s priority of advancing racial equity through the reconciliation process,⁸ we must include these investments in full in the final package. We know you share this commitment given your support for key maternal health legislation and your tireless efforts to champion these investments in New York and across the country.⁹ We appreciate your partnership on this issue and we look forward to working with you to deliver on these priorities on behalf of the mothers, babies, and families who are counting on us to get this done.

Sincerely,

Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress

Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress

Lauren Underwood
Member of Congress

Colin Allred
Member of Congress

Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress

Karen Bass
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Lisa Blunt Rochester
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Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

Carolyn Bourdeaux
Member of Congress

Brendan F. Boyle
Member of Congress

Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress

⁷ White House: *FACT SHEET: Vice President Kamala Harris Announces Call to Action to Reduce Maternal Mortality and Morbidity*. December 7, 2021.

⁸ White House: *How President Biden’s Build Back Better Agenda Helps Black Communities*. August 13, 2021.

⁹ Senator Charles E. Schumer: *SCHUMER, CLARKE, OLORI SISTERHOOD: PREGNANT BLACK MOMS 3X MORE LIKELY TO DIE & OVER TWICE AS LIKELY TO HAVE COMPLICATED BIRTHS; SCHUMER, CLARKE & OLORI SISTERHOOD PUSH PASSAGE OF MOMNIBUS IN BUILD BACK BETTER ACT TO COMBAT NY’S MATERNAL HEALTH CRISIS, TO MAKE NY MOMS & FAMILIES SAFER*. November 11, 2021.

Julia Brownley
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Member of Congress

Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress

Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress

Troy A. Carter, Sr.
Member of Congress

Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick
Member of Congress

Judy Chu
Member of Congress

Yvette D. Clarke
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Gerald E. Connolly
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Angie Craig
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Jason Crow
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Danny K. Davis
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Madeleine Dean
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