

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Committee on Public Health and Human Services to hold hearings on the increase in maternal mortality among African-American women in Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, Each year in the United States, about 700 to 1,200 women die from pregnancy or childbirth complications, and black women are about three to four times more likely to die of pregnancy or delivery complications than white women; and

WHEREAS, Black women comprised three-quarters of all pregnancy-related deaths in Philadelphia between 2010 and 2012 - a maternal mortality rate 53 percent higher than the national average - while Pennsylvania has seen its maternal mortality rate double since 1994; and

WHEREAS, High blood pressure and cardiovascular disease are two of the leading causes of maternal death, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and hypertensive disorders in pregnancy, including pre-eclampsia, have been on the rise over the past two decades, increasing 72 percent from 1993 to 2014; and

WHEREAS, A U.S. Department of Health and Human Services report from 2017 found that pre-eclampsia and eclampsia are 60 percent more common in African-American women and also more severe; and

WHEREAS, Many Black women impacted are represented at all income and education levels and experience a range of disproportionate health disparities and risk factors, including barriers to accessing comprehensive health care, finding culturally competent health practitioners, and navigating a health care system with inherent racial bias that dismisses legitimate concerns and symptoms; and

WHEREAS, Researchers have pointed to the differences in overall health and chronic illnesses among black and white women as a driving factor for longstanding racial disparities in maternal health, which is reflected in higher rates of obesity and high blood pressure - risk factors for pregnancy complications -- among black women; and

WHEREAS, Recommendations by health experts to reverse the trend in increasing maternal mortality among Black women include expanding equitable coverage for a full range of maternal health services, including doula and midwifery, behavioral health, and paid parental leave; and

WHEREAS, Black women face the greatest danger when they deliver their children, and the rising number of maternal deaths among this population is a serious public health concern that must be addressed comprehensively, with a commitment to providing for the health, safety, and well-being of mothers; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Authorize the Committee on Public Health and Human Services to hold hearings on the increase in maternal mortality among African-American women in Philadelphia.

