

July 23, 2020

The Honorable Mark Takano
Chairman
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
B234 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Phil Roe, M.D.
Ranking Member
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
B234 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Takano and Ranking Member Roe:

The undersigned 26 organizations, dedicated to improving maternal and child health, thank you for considering H.R. 6141, the Protecting Moms Who Served Act, in today's legislative hearing in the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. We strongly support this bill and appreciate your leadership in addressing our nation's maternal mortality crisis.

As we work to end preventable maternal deaths, we are concerned by the paucity of data on maternal health outcomes among veterans. The Protecting Moms Who Served Act, led by Representatives Lauren Underwood (IL-14) and Gus Bilirakis (FL-12), would help inform us of the scope of maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity among veterans, with a particular focus on minoritized populations, as well as make critical investments in maternity care coordination through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Women are currently the fastest growing group within the veteran population. However, maternity care is not provided directly in VA facilities. Instead, VA partners with community-based obstetric clinicians. We must ensure that women veterans receive high-quality care from community clinicians, and that robust social supports are in place to address all the needs that women veterans will face during pregnancy, through labor and delivery, and up to one year postpartum.

VA addresses the clinical and nonclinical perinatal needs of women veterans through maternity care coordination programs, which ensure effective coordination between VA and non-VA facilities in the delivery of maternity care and other health care services. The Protecting Moms Who Served Act would provide critical funding for maternity care coordination. These investments could facilitate access to community resources to address social determinants of health like nutrition and housing as well as identifying mental and behavioral health risk factors in the prenatal and postpartum periods and provide follow-up treatment options. Other examples of supports available through VA maternity care coordination include classes on childbirth preparation, lactation, and parenting; breast pumps and breastfeeding support; and nutrition counseling. These investments will ensure that moms have access to vital care and resources to improve health outcomes.

The Protecting Moms Who Served Act would also commission a comprehensive study on maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity among women veterans, with a particular focus on racial and ethnic disparities in maternal health outcomes. The study will make recommendations for the improvement of maternal health data collection processes and steps to reduce adverse maternal health outcomes among veterans. To prevent pregnancy-related complications in the future, we need a complete understanding of the unique risks facing women who served, including post-traumatic stress disorder and military sexual trauma.

The Protecting Moms Who Served Act is a significant step towards eliminating preventable maternal mortality and severe morbidity among women veterans and reducing racial and ethnic inequities in

outcomes. We are proud to support this legislation and look forward to working with you to get this important bipartisan bill enacted into law.

Sincerely,

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Association of Birth Centers
American College of Nurse-Midwives
American Psychiatric Association
AMVETS
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs
Black Mamas Matter Alliance
Black Women's Health Imperative
BreastfeedLA
Center for Reproductive Rights
Community Catalyst
In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda
Jacobs Institute of Women's Health
March for Moms
March of Dimes
Mom Congress
MomsRising
NARAL Pro-Choice America
National Partnership for Women & Families
National WIC Association
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Power to Decide
Servicewomen's Action Network
SisterReach
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine
Women Veterans Interactive Inc