



July 12, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

The Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) and the Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs (AMCHP) are pleased that the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions unanimously passed the Maternal Health Accountability Act (S. 1112) on June 26, 2018. This bipartisan bill, led by Senator Heidi Heitkamp and Senator Shelley Moore Capito, would help combat the rising rate of maternal mortality in the United States. We strongly urge the full Senate to consider and support this important legislation as soon as possible.

ASTHO and AMCHP are organizations whose members face the monumental task of supporting the health and well-being of all Americans, including mothers. Our members are the public health leaders who work every day across our nation to save lives. That is why our organizations stand behind this legislation.

Unlike every other industrialized country, maternal deaths in the United States are on the rise. From 2000 to 2014, the United States' maternal mortality ratio increased by 26.6%, from 18.8 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2000 to 23.8 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2014.¹ Each year, an estimated 700 women in the U.S. die as a result of pregnancy or pregnancy-related complications.² Of these maternal deaths, an estimated 60 percent are preventable.³

Maternal Mortality Review Committees (MMRCs) are the gold standard in maternal mortality surveillance. They bring together multidisciplinary health care professionals to review individual maternal deaths and make targeted recommendations based on those findings to prevent similar outcomes in the future. These data-driven reviews are critical tools to understanding maternal deaths and identifying opportunities for prevention. The Maternal Health Accountability Act would build on state-led solutions to address maternal mortality by assisting states to either establish or expand MMRCs. Currently, only 34 states have established MMRCs, and even those states with MMRCs need additional support to transform their reviews into action. For these reasons, we strongly urge you to bring S. 1112 for a full vote by the Senate.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and for your commitment to addressing the tragic problem of preventable maternal death and its impact on families and our society.

Sincerely,

John M. Wiesman, DrPH, MPH
President, ASTHO
Secretary of Health
Washington State Department of Health

Susan Chacon, MSW, LISW
President, AMCHP
Director, Title V Children with Special Health Care Needs
New Mexico Department of Health

¹ U.S. Maternal Mortality Trends. Sept. 2016. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5001799/>

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Pregnancy-Related Deaths. May 2018 <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternalinfanthealth/pregnancy-relatedmortality.htm>

³ CDC Foundation. Report from Maternal Mortality Review Committees: A View into Their Critical Role. Jan. 2017. <https://www.cdcfoundation.org/sites/default/files/files/MMRIAREport.pdf>