

The Northwest Georgia Chapter of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women Inc.
A Call to Address the Maternal Health Crisis for Black Women in the State of Georgia

The National Coalition of 100 Black Women Inc. (NCBW) is a tax-exempt organization founded in 1981, that advocates on behalf of Black women and girls to promote leadership and gender equity in the areas of health, education, and economic empowerment. The Northwest Georgia Chapter of National Coalition of 100 Black Women is dedicated to civic engagement, community service, leadership development, and advocacy through programs for women and girls. The chapter serves Cobb, Cherokee, Douglas, North Fulton and Paulding counties. The Northwest Georgia Chapter of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women stands firmly for the improvements in our state health care systems as well as more legislative action to address the Maternal Health Crisis for Black women in our state. The United States has the highest rate of maternal mortality rates among high income nations; the rate is higher than it has been in decades. Georgia has the second highest maternal mortality ratio of any state in the country. Black mothers in Georgia are two to three times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than white mothers; especially in the state's rural areas. Maternal Mortality is one of the many health disparities for Black women that impact our quality of life; our ability to have healthy pregnancies, safe deliveries and postpartum care.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines Maternal mortality as the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management, but not from accidental or incidental causes. The State of Georgia's Maternal Mortality Review Committee, led by the Georgia Department of Health evaluates the state's maternal mortality in these following categories:

- Pregnancy-Associated Deaths - A death during or within one year of pregnancy, regardless of the cause
- Pregnancy-Related Death - A death during pregnancy or within one year of the end of the pregnancy from a pregnancy complication, a chain of events initiated by the pregnancy, or the aggravation of an unrelated condition by the physiologic effects of pregnancy.
- Pregnancy-Associated Death, but not related - A death during pregnancy or within one year of the end of the pregnancy from a cause that is not related to the pregnancy.
- Pregnancy-Associated, but unable to determine pregnancy-relatedness - A pregnancy-associated death that the committee was unable to determine as pregnancy-related or pregnancy-associated, but not related.

Data from the 2018-2020 Maternal Mortality Report from the Georgia Department of Public Health states that there were 270 pregnancy associated deaths; 113 (42%) were pregnancy-related deaths, 139 (52%) were pregnancy- associated but not related deaths and 18 (7%) were pregnancy associated but unable to determine relatedness. The causes of deaths of 79 (70%) of the pregnancy-related deaths, were due to the leading causes of death: hemorrhage, mental health conditions, cardiomyopathy, cardiovascular and coronary conditions. Out of the 113, (89%) of the deaths had at least some chance of being prevented. Factors that contribute to pregnancy-related deaths are obesity, bias and discrimination, mental health conditions and substance abuse disorder.

Of the 113 pregnancy related deaths 63 (58%) were Non-Hispanic, Black women, 66 (60%) of pregnancy related deaths were among women with a high school degree or less, 53 (60%) of the pregnancy-related deaths were insured by Medicaid. Maternal mortality is a public health crisis among Black women that impacts us no matter what our educational attainment or socioeconomic status.

Addressing the Maternal Health Crisis for Black Women in the state of Georgia has to be a community effort between the healthcare system, researchers, community organizations and legislators/policy makers. The Northwest Georgia Chapter strongly endorses the following recommendations to effectively address the crisis:

Data Collection:

- Continue the Mandated Reporting required by law (O.C.G.A. § 31-12-2), which requires all Georgia physicians, laboratories, and other health care providers to report the death of a woman during or within one year of the end of pregnancy, irrespective of cause, within 7 days.
- Continue the Maternal Mortality Review Committee led by the Department of Public Health.

Advocacy and Education

- Black Maternal Health Week is recognized each year from April 11-17 to bring attention and action in improving Black maternal health.
- Year-round education and advocacy from Community Organizations, Public Health Departments and organizations such as [Black Mamas Matter Alliance](#).

Health Care System Improvements

- Identify and address biases in health care.
- Identify and address social factors influencing maternal health such as unstable housing, food insecurity, violence, racial and economic inequality.
- Standardize coordination of care and response to emergencies.
- Improve delivery of quality of prenatal and postpartum care.

Legislation, Policy Making and State Licensing

- On January 25, 2024, Georgia State Senators Jackson of the 41st, Butler of the 55th, Anderson of the 43rd, McLauren of the 13th, and Halpern issue Senate Resolution 489 that focused on recognizing the Black maternal health crisis in the state.
- Expand Midwifery Licensure in Georgia and Establish a State Board of Community Midwifery. Midwifery expansion is a recommendation from Black Mamas Matters Alliance. Midwifery was a practice that helped improve maternal outcomes for Black women, however, there has been a suppression of Black Midwifery in Georgia.
- Medicaid expansion - Georgia is one of the few states that has not expanded Medicaid. This expansion would improve maternal health outcomes since 60% of the pregnancy related deaths were from women who were insured by Medicaid.

References:

[Georgia Department of Public Health 2018-2020 Maternal Mortality Report](#)

[World Population Review Mortality Rate by State 2024](#)

[Black Mamas Matter: Issue Brief Expanding Midwifery Licensure in Georgia](#)

[Working Together to Reduce Black Maternal Mortality- CDC April 8, 2024](#)

[Georgia lawmakers to discuss solutions for high maternal mortality rates- 11 Alive News January 23, 2024](#)