

# HEALTHY MOMS & BABIES ACT – SUMMARY

Sponsored by Senator Chuck Grassley (Iowa)

Rates of maternal mortality and morbidity are reaching crisis levels. There is widespread consensus among policy experts and stakeholders that pregnancy and childbirth too often include adverse events for women and infants, including death and other negative outcomes. According to the World Health Organization<sup>1</sup> and others, the maternal mortality rate in the United States is 19 per 100,000 live births, compared to 7 per 100,000 in the United Kingdom, and 6 per 100,000 in Australia. Similar disparities also exist when it comes to rates of negative health outcomes caused or aggravated by pregnancy and childbirth.

Within the United States, the maternal health crisis particularly affects women of color and women living in rural areas. These groups experience worse maternal health outcomes, on average, when compared to other groups. The maternal mortality rate across all ages and races has increased in recent years (up 36.7% from 2018 to 2020).<sup>2</sup> Initial data indicates rates may have increased even more during the pandemic.<sup>3</sup> In rural America, women often lack access to timely, high-quality maternal health care services.<sup>4</sup> Women of color are at risk in both urban and rural settings.<sup>5, 6</sup> Despite these challenges, maternal mortality is preventable. Recent data from the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) indicates that 80% of pregnancy-related deaths are preventable.<sup>7</sup> In a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on rural maternal mortality, cardiovascular conditions, infections, and hemorrhages were all leading causes for pregnancy-related deaths.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, an estimated 50,000 women annually experience a life-threatening pregnancy complication.<sup>9</sup> A lack of obstetric services and health care workforce is a significant factor in determining the quality of rural health care delivery.<sup>10</sup>

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Iowa has faced similar challenges as the rest of the country. Iowa's most recent maternal mortality rate is 18.6 per 100,000.<sup>11</sup> Over 60% of pregnancy-related deaths are preventable.<sup>12</sup> Fewer and fewer counties in Iowa offer maternity services with over 20 labor and delivery units having closed in the past decade.<sup>13, 14</sup> Iowa continues to make progress to bring key stakeholders together and better understand the challenges through data and analysis. Iowa has taken steps to improve maternal and child health care, including community-driven solutions, sharing best practices, providing technical support, and utilizing telehealth.<sup>15, 16</sup>

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With these multifaceted challenges, we must take a comprehensive approach to improving maternal and child health. The Healthy Moms and Babies Act does this by improving maternal and child health services and supports, increasing access to high-quality coordinated care, supporting women and babies with 21<sup>st</sup> century technology such as telehealth, and taking other steps to reduce maternal mortality.



## What the Bill Does – Healthy Moms & Babies Act

The Healthy Moms and Babies Act will improve maternal and child health care by:

- Coordinating and providing “whole-person” care, supporting outcome-focused and community-based prevention and support efforts including stillbirth prevention activities, and expanding the maternal health workforce.
- Modernizing maternal health care through telehealth to support women of color and women living in rural America.
- Reducing maternal mortality and high-risk pregnancies, and improving our understanding of social determinants of health in pregnant and postpartum women.

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, "Maternal mortality," "September 2021," <https://data.unicef.org/topic/maternal-health/maternal-mortality/>.

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, "Maternal Mortality Rates in the United States, 2020," February 23, 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hestat/maternal-mortality/2020/maternal-mortality-rates-2020.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> Slomski A. Maternal Death Rate Increased During Early COVID-19 Pandemic. JAMA. 2022;328(5):415. doi:10.1001/jama.2022.12729.

<sup>4</sup> Government Accountability Office, "MATERNAL MORTALITY: Trends in Pregnancy Related Deaths and Federal Efforts to Reduce Them," March 2020, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-20-248.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR), "Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Pregnancy-Related Deaths — United States, 2007–2016," September 6, 2019, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/68/wr/mm6835a3.htm>.

<sup>6</sup> The Commonwealth Fund, "Restoring Access to Maternity Care in Rural America," September 30, 2021,

<https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/2021/sep/restoring-access-maternity-care-rural-america>.

<sup>7</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Four in 5 pregnancy-related deaths in the U.S. are preventable," September 19, 2022,

<https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2022/p0919-pregnancy-related-deaths.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Government Accountability Office, "MATERNAL MORTALITY: Trends in Pregnancy Related Deaths and Federal Efforts to Reduce Them," March 2020, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-20-248.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Iowa Department of Public Health, Division of Health Promotion & Chronic Disease Prevention - Bureau of Family Health, "Access to Obstetrical Care in Iowa: A Report to the Iowa State Legislature - Calendar year 2020," January 2022, [https://idph.iowa.gov/Portals/1/userfiles/88/OBCareinIowa\\_2022LegislativeReport%20%28SUBMITTED%29.pdf](https://idph.iowa.gov/Portals/1/userfiles/88/OBCareinIowa_2022LegislativeReport%20%28SUBMITTED%29.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> Iowa Department of Public Health, Bureau of Family Health, "Maternal Health Programs Strategic Plan 2021," 2021, <https://idph.iowa.gov/Portals/1/userfiles/38/Iowa-Maternal-Health-Strategic-Plan-2021.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> Iowa Department of Public Health, "2021 Iowa Maternal Mortality Review Committee Report," July 7, 2021,

<https://idph.iowa.gov/Portals/1/userfiles/38/Maternal%20Health%20Data%20Reports/2021%20Iowa%20Maternal%20Mortality%20Review%20Committee%20Report.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> Iowa Department of Public Health, Bureau of Family Health, "Maternal Health Programs Strategic Plan 2021," 2021,

<https://idph.iowa.gov/Portals/1/userfiles/38/Iowa-Maternal-Health-Strategic-Plan-2021.pdf>; Iowa Department of Public Health, "Access to Obstetrical Care in Iowa: A Report to the Iowa State Legislature - Calendar year 2020," January 2022,

[https://idph.iowa.gov/Portals/1/userfiles/88/OBCareinIowa\\_2022LegislativeReport%20%28SUBMITTED%29.pdf](https://idph.iowa.gov/Portals/1/userfiles/88/OBCareinIowa_2022LegislativeReport%20%28SUBMITTED%29.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> Green, Mary, "Moms worried as more obstetrics units closing across Iowa," KCRG, August 13, 2019, <https://www.kcrg.com/content/news/Moms-worried-as-more-obstetrics-units-closing-across-Iowa-541020291.html>.

<sup>15</sup> University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine, "Iowa wins major federal grant to improve maternal health care," October 1, 2019, <https://medicine.uiowa.edu/content/iowa-wins-major-federal-grant-improve-maternal-health-care>.

<sup>16</sup> Iowa Department of Public Health, Bureau of Family Health, "Maternal Health Programs Strategic Plan 2021," 2021, <https://idph.iowa.gov/Portals/1/userfiles/38/Iowa-Maternal-Health-Strategic-Plan-2021.pdf>.