



COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY & COMMERCE
DEMOCRATS
RANKING MEMBER FRANK PALLONE, JR.

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CONTACT

[CJ Young](#) (202) 225-5735

Pallone Remarks at Hearing on Reducing Maternal Mortality

Washington, D.C. – *Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) delivered the following opening remarks today at a Subcommittee on Health hearing on “Better Data and Better Outcomes: Reducing Maternal Mortality in the US:”*

Hundreds of women die each year from pregnancy-related or pregnancy-associated complications in the U.S., and more than sixty percent of these deaths are preventable. Shamefully, the maternal mortality rate in the United States has increased, while in most of the rest of the developed world it has fallen. This is not just alarming – it’s unconscionable.

We have a responsibility to understand why this is happening and what we should be doing to combat this crisis. Mr. Green and I wrote a letter to Chairman Burgess and Chairman Walden on this issue in May, and I am pleased we are finally holding a hearing today, I just wish it wasn’t in the waning days of our Congressional session.

Today we will discuss a draft of the Preventing Maternal Deaths Act, which mirrors a version that passed out of the Senate HELP Committee. This is a good bill. It is critical that we have the necessary data to understand the underlying causes of maternal deaths and identify strategies that can help us combat it. This bill encourages states to implement Maternal Mortality Review Committees to study this data and make recommendations on ways to combat maternal death. Review committees that are diverse and interdisciplinary can identify trends, patterns, and disparities that contribute to preventable maternal deaths. With this information health care providers can monitor the effectiveness of their policy and practice changes.

My home state of New Jersey was the second state in the nation to institute a maternal mortality review committee, which has worked extensively to review the state’s maternal death cases to better understand their root causes and prevent deaths in the future. However, New Jersey’s maternal mortality rate remains much too high and much more work still must be done.

Extensive public reporting has vividly described the risks American women face in childbirth and the postpartum period and has also highlighted the vast disparities in outcome. While women of all backgrounds are at risk for pregnancy-related complications, it is critical we also examine why maternal death rates are disproportionately higher for women of color, low-income women, and women living in rural areas. We must understand why, and work together to address these disparities.

However, we must also consider other ways we can combat maternal mortality, including by expanding health insurance coverage and ensuring all women have access to the reproductive health services they need. Unfortunately, efforts by this Administration to sabotage the Affordable Care Act, curtail the Medicaid program, and limit family planning services has only served to harm women and their families.

Reducing maternal deaths in the United States must be a public health priority. I look forward to working with my colleagues to advance this bill and to begin addressing this crisis in a meaningful way.

I would now like to yield two minutes to my colleague, the Democratic sponsor of H.R. 1318, Ms. DeGette.

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