

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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May 14, 2018

The Honorable Greg Walden
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Michael C. Burgess
Chairman
Subcommittee on Health
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Walden and Chairman Burgess:

We write to request that the Energy and Commerce Committee schedule a hearing on maternal mortality in the United States in order to hear testimony from experts on how we can begin to address this critical public health issue. As the Committee with broad jurisdiction over public health and women's health issues, we have a responsibility to understand why more women die from pregnancy-related complications in the United States than in any other developed country and what we should be doing to combat this crisis.

Extensive public reporting has vividly described the risks American women face in childbirth and the postpartum period and has highlighted the vast disparity in outcomes for women in the United States versus other developed nations.¹ Despite falling maternal mortality rates in other countries, the estimated maternal mortality rate in the United States increased by 26.6 percent from 2000 to 2014.² The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that about 700 women die each year in the United States as a result of pregnancy or delivery

¹ See NPR, Special Series, Lost Mothers: Maternal Mortality in the U.S. (<https://www.npr.org/series/543928389/lost-mothers>); ProPublica, Lost Mothers (<https://www.propublica.org/article/lost-mothers-maternal-health-died-childbirth-pregnancy>).

² MacDorman, et al, U.S. Maternal Mortality Trends, Sept. 2016 (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5001799/pdf/nihms810951.pdf>).

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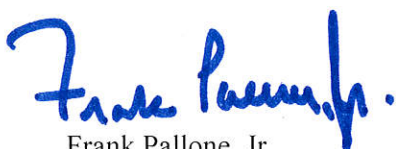
complications³ and while numerous factors contribute to maternal death, research has also demonstrated that most pregnancy-related deaths are preventable.⁴

While women of all backgrounds are at risk for pregnancy-related complications and death, maternal death rates are disproportionately higher for women of color, low-income women, and women living in rural areas. In fact, the CDC notes that the risk of pregnancy-related deaths for black women is 3 to 4 times higher than those of white women.⁵ These disparities must be considered and addressed within larger discussions of maternal mortality as well.

The maternal mortality rate is a critical indicator of the quality of our health care system, as well as how we prioritize women's health in this country. Four million U.S. women give birth each year. It's time that we begin to address this public health crisis. I urge the Committee to hold a hearing as soon as possible to begin considering proposals to reverse this unconscionable trend and help save the lives of American women.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Ranking Member



Gene Green
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Health

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Pregnancy-Related Deaths (<https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternalinfanthealth/pregnancy-relatedmortality.htm>).

⁴ Report from Nine Maternal Mortality Review Committees, Building U.S. Capacity to Review and Prevent Maternal Deaths, 2018 (<https://www.cdcfoundation.org/sites/default/files/files/ReportFromNineMMRCs.pdf>).

⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Pregnancy-Related Deaths (<https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternalinfanthealth/pregnancy-relatedmortality.htm>).