



February 26, 2020

**To:** Honorable Shane Pendergrass, Chairman  
House Health & Government Operations Committee

**From:** Andreea Creanga  
Associate Professor and Director  
Maryland Maternal Health Innovation Program  
Johns Hopkins University

**RE: Letter of Support- House Bill 837- Public Health – Maternal Mortality and Morbidity – Implicit Bias Training and Study**

I'm writing on behalf of the Maryland Maternal Health Innovation Program, a five-year initiative that started in October 2019 and aims to improve maternal health across the State of Maryland. This program is a collaboration between the Johns Hopkins University, Maryland Department of Health, Maryland Patient Safety Center, and University of Maryland, Baltimore County. This Program is funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) through an award totaling \$10.3 million.

Our team **strongly supports House Bill 837** "*Public Health – Maternal Mortality and Morbidity – Implicit Bias Training and Study*". This bill will serve as a critical accountability mechanism for activities planned for and funded by our program. This includes both implicit bias training for perinatal health providers and the study of severe maternal morbidity in Maryland.

The timing of the bill could not be more critical. Every year, about 1,650 women in Maryland develop severe, life-threatening pregnancy complications and 40 or more women die from such complications<sup>1,2</sup>. Non-Hispanic Black women have a 1.8 times higher risk of developing severe pregnancy complications and a 2.7 times higher risk of dying from conditions directly related to pregnancy than non-Hispanic White women.<sup>1,2</sup> To reduce maternal mortality and morbidity in Maryland, we must address the implicit biases that contribute to these health disparities. **Our program is funded to offer implicit bias training to perinatal health providers in our state starting in 2020 and this bill provides an important way to ensure accountability in this process.**

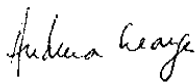
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Research shows that 60% of adverse maternal events are preventable.<sup>3,4</sup> To understand how to prevent such events from occurring, there is need to study their causes and specific contributors at individual, provider, hospital and community levels. **Our program proposed and has funding to establish a facility-based study of severe maternal morbidity in birthing hospitals in Maryland.** During a pilot phase in 2020, we will develop and test forms and processes to identify and review severe maternal morbidity in birthing hospitals in our state. We are, therefore, in a good position to assist in carrying out activities proposed in Section 2 of House Bill 837; and we look forward to sharing our results with the Health and Government Operations Committee.

In conclusion, we are in full support of House Bill 837 and eager to assist the State with the work being proposed to improve the quality of care received by pregnant and postpartum women in Maryland.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.



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## References

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2. Maryland Maternal Mortality Review. 2018 Annual Report available at: <https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/mch/Pages/mmr.aspx>.
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