HB0796 - Public Health - Maternal Mortality Review Program - Establishment of Local Teams
Presented to the Hon. Shane E. Pendergrass and
Members of the House Government and Operations Committee.
February 27, 2019 1:00 p.m.

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POSITION: SUPPORT

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland **urges the House Health and Government Operations Committee a favourable report on HB0796,** Public Health - Maternal Mortality Review Program - Establishment of Local Teams, sponsored by Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins.

Our organization is an advocate for reproductive rights, health and justice. Maternal health is a key area of this mission and having more knowledge of maternal mortality will help make efforts to combat it more effective. The rate of maternal mortality in Maryland was 23.5[1] deaths per 100,000 live births in 2018 which was higher than the national average rate of 20.7. When race is made a factor, it becomes clear that there is a great disparity between the maternal mortality rate of white women (17.6) and that of Black women (40.5). These figures differ again from the national averages which shows that different regions have unique problems in this area and must be treated as such. This is why it is important for the Maternal Mortality Review Program to establish local teams, to allow them to collect data on this issue for it to be tackled in the most efficient way for each county.

These local teams are specifically tasked with understanding causes and incidences of maternal mortality. This will help them target collection of data towards areas that will help better solutions to be crafted. HB0796 also ensures that members of the team have complimenting areas of expertise which helps the reliability of the data as those compiling it and examining it will have knowledge of that specific field and all the facets of it. Teams are also tasked with investigating the various nuances of the issue, from racial disparities to issues of incarcerated women, and will ensure that data collected is thorough and more widely useful. Furthermore, this bill protects the confidentiality of women as identifying information cannot be disclosed at a public meeting. This bill also takes steps to improve coordination between facilities, again making the effort of tackling maternal mortality more efficient.

The consequences of failing to implement this bill will be that maternal mortality rates do not get the attention needed to improve at the local level. This bill will increase the volume of data available and be a great resource in tackling the issue.

We strongly support this effort to improve knowledge of maternal mortality and craft better and more localized solutions for the issue. Maternal care must be improved to ensure that every mother has the best possible chance of surviving childbirth in good health. The current rate of maternal mortality reflects the fact that preventable deaths are occurring when a more efficient and effective system could avoid them. For these reasons, **NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges a favorable report on HB0796**. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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[1] America's Health Rankings. (2019). *Explore Maternal Mortality in Maryland | 2018 Health of Women and Children Report*. [online] Available at: https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/health-of-women-and-children/measure/maternal_mortality/state/MD [Accessed 11 Feb. 2019].