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## Reps. Adams and Rep. Underwood, and Senator Harris Unveil Historic Legislative Package to Address America's Black Maternal Health Crisis

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### Reps. Adams and Rep. Underwood, and Senator Harris Unveil Historic Legislative Package to Address America's Black Maternal Health Crisis

**WASHINGTON**— Today, **Representatives Alma Adams (NC-12)** and **Lauren Underwood (IL-14)**, **Senator Kamala Harris (D-CA)**, and members of the Black Maternal Health Caucus introduced a historic legislative package to address the United States' urgent maternal health crisis. *The Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act of 2020* will build on existing maternal health legislation by filling gaps through the nine new bills to comprehensively address every dimension of the Black maternal health crisis. *The Black Maternal Health Momnibus* makes investments in social determinants of health, community-based organizations, the growth and diversification of the perinatal workforce, improvements in data collection and quality measures, digital tools like telehealth, and innovative payment models. In addition to direct efforts to improve Black maternal health outcomes, the Momnibus focuses on high-risk populations, including women veterans, incarcerated women, and Native Americans.

"For decades, the US maternal mortality and morbidity rates have gotten worse for all mothers, but especially for Black women whose health outcomes are further compounded by systemic and structural racism," said **Representative Adams, co-founder and co-chair of the Black Maternal Health Caucus**. "The Black Maternal Health Momnibus is a historic piece of legislation that not only fills existing gaps in maternal healthcare, but also works to address pervasive maternal health disparities through solutions that are culturally-congruent and proven effective. The Momnibus provides a new roadmap to ensure our healthcare systems, providers, and society truly make Black maternal and infant health a priority.

"This legislation says, unequivocally, that Black Moms matter," **Rep. Adams continued**. "I'm proud to stand with my colleagues to unveil a comprehensive package that tackles one of the greatest public health crises of our time."

Rep. Adams is the primary sponsor on H.R. 6144, **The Kira Johnson Act**, which invests in community-based organizations and other initiatives to prevent maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity, especially for Black women. It is named after Kira Johnson, who passed away 12 hours after she delivered her son because an internal hemorrhage caused by her cesarean section was discovered too late.

"Black women across the country are dying from pregnancy and childbirth complications at astounding rates- and the disparity transcends income and education levels," said **Senator Kamala Harris**. "It is critical that the federal government work with states, local health providers, and mothers and their families to address the crisis and save lives. The Black Maternal Health Momnibus will address many barriers to care so we can improve maternal health outcomes and help ensure women—especially Black women—have access to comprehensive, culturally competent care."

"While maternal mortality rates continue to drop around the world, they are rising in

the U.S., leaving behind devastated families and children who will grow up never knowing their moms. This crisis demands urgent attention and serious action to save the lives of Black mothers and all women across the county,” **said Representative Underwood, co-founder and co-chair of the Black Maternal Health Caucus.** “The Black Maternal Health Momnibus is a sweeping effort to address our nation’s maternal mortality crisis through effective, evidence-based, and culturally competent solutions. The time to end preventable maternal mortality and close racial and ethnic disparities in outcomes is long overdue. With the Black Maternal Health Momnibus, we can work together to solve this crisis right now. New moms and their children and families deserve nothing less.”

The *Black Maternal Health Momnibus* is composed of nine individual bills sponsored by members of the Black Maternal Health Caucus and Senator Harris. The legislation will:

- Make critical investments in social determinants of health that influence maternal health outcomes, like housing, transportation, and nutrition;
- Provide funding to community-based organizations that are working to improve maternal health outcomes, particularly for Black women;
- Comprehensively study the unique maternal health risks facing women veterans and invest in VA maternity care coordination;
- Grow and diversify the perinatal workforce to ensure that every mom in America receives maternity care and support from people she can trust;
- Improve data collection processes and quality measures to better understand the causes of the maternal health crisis in the United States and inform solutions to address it;
- Invest in maternal mental health care and substance use disorder treatments;
- Improve maternal health care and support for incarcerated women;
- Invest in digital tools like telehealth to improve maternal health outcomes in underserved areas; and
- Promote innovative payment models to incentivize high-quality maternity care and continuity of health insurance coverage from pregnancy through labor and delivery and up to 1 year postpartum.

A one-pager of the Black Maternal Health Momnibus can be found [here](#).

A section-by-section summary of the Black Maternal Health Momnibus can be found [here](#).

The Black Maternal Health Momnibus has also gained endorsements from many of the leading health and family organizations, including the Center for Reproductive Rights, the Black Mamas Matter Alliance, and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

“The Center for Reproductive Rights applauds Representatives Lauren Underwood, Alma Adams, Ayanna Pressley, Joe Kennedy, Sharice Davids, Gwen Moore, Lucy McBath, Eddie Bernice Johnson, Jan Schakowsky, Senators Kamala Harris and Cory Booker, and the Black Maternal Health Caucus for introducing a human rights-based solution to the Black maternal health crisis in the US. This significant undertaking unabashedly addresses racism in our health care system – the root cause of the issue. From start to finish, the “Momnibus” fights for the right of all birthing and postpartum people to access safe and respectful maternal health care. We are proud to endorse a package of bills that meaningfully centers the voices, experiences, and leadership of Black and Brown communities. We look forward to continue working with the Black Maternal Health Caucus to raise awareness and address this human rights crisis,” **said Jennifer Jacoby, Federal Policy Counsel, Center for Reproductive Rights.**

“While the rates of maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity in the United States are unacceptable, even more concerning is the stark racial and ethnic disparities in these outcomes. As the Nation’s leading physician organization dedicated to advancing women’s health, ACOG is fully committed to confronting implicit and explicit bias and racism as a critical part of our work to provide high quality, respectful care to all women, improve maternal health outcomes, and eliminate disparities in women’s health. We are grateful to the Black Maternal Health Caucus, under the leadership of Representatives Underwood and Adams, for its partnership and tireless work in developing its Momnibus. This important legislation promotes diversity and inclusivity in the perinatal workforce and aims to directly impact the unacceptable rate of maternal deaths among Black women. We share in the Caucus’ goals and look forward to continuing our work together to advance meaningful legislation that improves maternal health,” **said Maureen Phipps, MD, MPH, FACOG, Chief Executive Officer, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.**

“The Momnibus, put forward by the Black Maternal Health Caucus, has the potential to be transformative for Black maternal health because it goes beyond addressing maternal death and helps to advance maternal health equity. By centering black women-led organizations like BMMA, in the process, this package takes a proactive approach to addressing many of the systematic public health challenges, workforce development issues, and everyday experiences of Black birthing persons before, during, and after pregnancy. Thank you to the Black Maternal Health Caucus for prioritizing the needs of those most impacted by the maternal health crisis in the United States,” **said Angela Aina, Interim Executive Director of the Black Mamas Matter Alliance.**

Additionally, The Black Maternal Health Momnibus is endorsed by 93 groups. A full list of endorsements of the Momnibus can be found [here](#).

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