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Kira Johnson Act Gains Momentum in Congress as Adams Urges Passage

Alma Adams Press [sam.spencer@mail.house.gov]

Sent: Friday, November 20, 2020 2:02 PM

To: [Steve Johnston](#)

Kira Johnson Act Gains Momentum in Congress as Adams Urges Passage

New cosponsors join Adams' bill to address the Black maternal health crisis

Washington, D.C. – Congresswoman Alma Adams (NC-12), co-founder and co-chair of the Black Maternal Health Caucus, is urging passage of her bill, the ***Kira Johnson Act***, before Congress goes home for the year.

H.R. 6144, the ***Kira Johnson Act***, gained 13 additional cosponsors this week.

“As COVID-19 continues to put enormous pressure on birthing parents, I’m highlighting an important bill in the Black Maternal Health Momnibus: the Kira Johnson Act. The bill invests in reducing maternal mortality and morbidity rates overall, and especially for Black women,” **said Representative Adams, co-founder and co-chair of the Black Maternal Health Caucus.** “Prior to the pandemic, Black moms were three to four times more likely than white moms to die in childbirth. Since January, 38,000 pregnant women in the US have been diagnosed with COVID-19. As pregnant women continue to seek necessary maternal health care during the pandemic, we must invest in culturally-competent organizations. Community-based health care providers are leading the charge in improving outcomes for Black women and birthing persons. Now is the time to close the Black maternal health gap. Black moms matter, and we need every Member of Congress to stand up and join us in supporting policies that save lives.”

“Addressing our nation's Black maternal health crisis must remain a top priority in Congress, especially in the midst of a pandemic that is exacerbating health inequities. The Kira Johnson Act provides critical funding to community-based organizations and other programs that will be needed to address the glaring racial and ethnic disparities in maternal health outcomes. I look forward to continuing my partnership with Congresswoman Adams and our Black Maternal Health Caucus to advance the Kira Johnson Act and the Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act in the

remaining months of the 116th Congress,” **said Rep. Lauren Underwood.**

[Information from the Centers for Disease Control on maternal mortality and morbidity during COVID-19 is available here.](#) Approximately 8,000 pregnant women have been hospitalized during COVID-19, predominately women of color. At least 51 pregnant women have died from the virus.

Kira’s story is heartbreaking (**[video, graphic](#)**), and Rep. Adams believes no woman should have to experience what Kira went through. In an **[hour-long interview about Black Maternal Health](#)** on WFAE’s Charlotte Talks earlier this year, Congresswoman Adams described how close her own daughter came to having a maternal health crisis, and how important it is to fight for legislation that recognizes that Black moms matter.

Specifically, the ***Kira Johnson Act*** would:

- Fund grant programs to reduce bias, racism, and discrimination trainings for all employees in maternity care settings.
- Provide funding for community-based organizations to prevent maternal mortality and severe morbidity among Black women.
- Establish Respectful Maternity Care Compliance Offices within hospitals to provide mechanisms for pregnant and postpartum patients to report instances of disrespect or evidence of racial, ethnic, or other types of bias and promote accountability.
- Direct the National Academies to study issues related to these training programs and the impact of the compliance offices.

New co-sponsors include **Reps. Deb Haaland (NM-01), Raul Grijalva (AZ-03), Steve Cohen (TN-09), Adam Smith (WA-09), Andre Carson (IN-07), Joyce Beatty (OH-03), Judy Chu (CA-27), Gerry Connolly (VA-11), Alcee Hastings (FL-20), Dwight Evans (PA-03), G. K. Butterfield (NC-01), Mark DeSaulnier (CA-11), and Sylvia Garcia (TX-29).**

The bill’s original co-sponsors in the House include **Rep. Lauren Underwood (IL-14), co-founder and co-chair of the Black Maternal Health Caucus,** Rep. Terri Sewell (AL-07), Rep. Elenaor Holmes Norton (DC-AL), Rep. Mary Gay Scanlon, (PA-05), Rep. Gwen Moore (WI-04), Rep. Wm. Lacy Clay (MO-01), Rep. Ro Khanna (CA-07), Rep. Ayanna Pressley (MA-07), Rep. Al Lawson, Jr. (FL-05), Rep. Karen Bass (CA-37), and previous co-sponsors include Reps. David Trone (MD-06) and Abby Finkenauer (IA-01). The entire Momnibus is led in the Senate by Senator Kamala Harris (CA).

Adams & Underwood co-founded the Black Maternal Health Caucus in 2019 and co-led the introduction of the Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act of 2020 in March. Over 2000 people, including Senators Cory Booker and Kamala Harris and Rep. Underwood, participated in Adams’ Women’s Symposium on Black Maternal Health During COVID-19 in April (**[video](#)**).

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