

---

**Planned Parenthood Empire State Acts**

**MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT  
A 10346-A (Joyner)/ S 8907 (Hannon)**

**2018**

**AN ACT to** amend the public health law, in relation to maternal mortality review boards and the maternal mortality and morbidity advisory council

---

New York State ranks 30<sup>th</sup> in the country for maternal mortality, an unacceptable number for a state that is otherwise a beacon of sexual and reproductive health care access.<sup>1</sup> This issue is further compounded by significant racial disparities, as black women are four times as likely as white women to die of pregnancy-related causes.<sup>2</sup> This disparity persists when one controls for income and education level, underscoring the troubling and pervasive role of systemic racism and the accompanying stress.<sup>3</sup> In New York City, for example, black, college-educated women are more likely to face maternal mortality and severe morbidity than are white women without a high school diploma.<sup>4</sup> Poverty also plays a role: two-thirds of maternal deaths in 2012-2013 were among women insured through the Medicaid program.<sup>5</sup> New York women deserve better—their health and lives depend on it.

This legislation would create a Maternal Mortality Review Board to review every maternal death that takes place in the state and to develop strategies aimed at preventing maternal deaths and complications in the future. The board would consist of fifteen individuals from multiple disciplines who represent the “diversity of the women and mothers in medically underserved areas of the state or areas of the state with disproportionately high occurrences of maternal mortality or morbidity.” The Board will meet at least twice a year to examine cases of maternal death or morbidity, including the cause of death, factors leading to death, preventability of the death or complications, and best practices and strategies for reducing the risk of maternal mortality and morbidity. Every two years, the Board will issue a report—to be made available to the public—regarding its findings and recommendations.

In adopting this legislation, New York State would join approximately 35 states and four cities—including New York City—that have or are working toward creating maternal mortality review boards or committees. The maternal mortality review board is a necessary tactic in what needs to be an innovative, multi-faceted approach to addressing maternal mortality in the state. The legislative session ends in a matter of weeks. We must act now on this issue. We cannot in good conscience continue with the status quo.

Planned Parenthood Empire State Acts believes in supporting women’s ability to reach their economic, educational, and reproductive goals. We want to see a world where women control if and when they become pregnant and where and how they give birth - ensuring they have access to the services and supports they need to do so safely and healthily. We believe that the Maternal Mortality Review Board is a vital step in making that vision the reality in New York.

**Planned Parenthood Empire State Acts urges the passage of this legislation before the end of the 2018 legislative session.**

---

<sup>1</sup> America’s Health Rankings. Explore Maternal Mortality in New York | 2016 Health of Women and Children Report, 2017. [http://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/2016-health-of-women-and-children-report/measure/maternal\\_mortality/state/NY](http://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/2016-health-of-women-and-children-report/measure/maternal_mortality/state/NY). As cited by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

<sup>2</sup> New York State Department of Health. Maternal Mortality Review 2012-2013 report.

[https://www.health.ny.gov/community/adults/women/docs/maternal\\_mortality\\_review\\_2012-2013.pdf](https://www.health.ny.gov/community/adults/women/docs/maternal_mortality_review_2012-2013.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Martin, N., & Montagne, R. (n.d.). Nothing Protects Black Women from Dying in Pregnancy and Childbirth. Retrieved from <https://www.propublica.org/article/nothing-protects-black-women-from-dying-in-pregnancy-and-childbirth>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> New York State Department of Health. New York State Maternal Mortality Review: Update. July 25, 2017.