what to expect project

The Honorable Alma Adams
Member of Congress
2436 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Cory Booker
U.S. Senator
717 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative Adams and Senator Booker:

On behalf of the What To Expect Project, I am writing to offer our support for the Black Maternal Health Week resolution and to extend our organization's full support during the fourth annual Black Maternal Health Week.

The *What To Expect Project* (WTEP) is a non-profit organization dedicated to educating, supporting, and empowering moms in need, in the United States and around the world, so they can expect healthier pregnancies, safer deliveries, healthier babies, and healthier futures. WTEP harnesses the power and global reach of the *What to Expect* brand and mobilizes its community of over 25 million moms to help bring about positive change. Our initiatives, programs, and advocacy priorities work to provide expectant moms and new moms with the information and respectful, responsive care they need to safely navigate pregnancy, postpartum and beyond.

With data recently released by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention showing yet another rise in the U.S. maternal mortality rate, it is more evident than ever that our nation is in the grips of a public health emergency that is both tragic and escalating. These unacceptable trends underscore the urgent need to pursue policies to ensure that every mom, regardless of her race or ethnicity, receives the care she needs to deliver a healthy beginning and healthy future for herself and the baby she loves.

Over the last two decades, disparities in healthcare and a consistent record of putting maternal health last, has made the U. S. the least safe place to have a baby in the developed world. While globally, maternal mortality has fallen, it has risen in the U.S., where every year, approximately 700 to 900 women die of complications of pregnancy and childbirth. Nearly two-thirds of these deaths are preventable. Every maternal death is unthinkable, but every death that could have been prevented with the proper care should be considered unacceptable.

Many factors contribute to this, but one looms larger: race. Black moms are at the greatest risk of all – nearly three times more likely to die of complications from pregnancy and childbirth than White moms. Risks to moms – especially moms of color – have risen even higher due to widening gaps in maternal health care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Black Maternal Health Week represents a vital opportunity to bring acutely needed awareness to what can only be described as crisis of maternal mortality and morbidity. Maternal health, including preconception health, is the foundation of all public health –

making solving this crisis not only a moral imperative, but also a public health imperative.

As the wealthiest nation in the world, the U.S. has a responsibility to deliver the quality, comprehensive, responsive, and respectful maternal healthcare, without exceptions, disparities, inequities, bias, and without arbitrary use-by-dates, that all moms need – but that, unfortunately, Black moms are statistically less likely to receive. In turn, this will lead to the healthy beginning and healthy future that every mom and every baby deserves.

In closing, on behalf of all moms, especially those who are most vulnerable, the WTEP and I thank you, Congresswoman Adams and Senator Booker, for your leadership, tireless efforts and commitment as champions of maternal health. We offer our organization's support to help advance this important congressional resolution, and to end all preventable maternal deaths.

If you have any questions, please contact Wyatt Murkoff, our Director of Policy and Strategy, at wyatt@whattoexpectproject.org.

Sincerely,

Heidi Murkoff
Founder of the What to Expect Project
and author of What to Expect When You're Expecting