

## HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 111

*Designating July, in 2020 and in each succeeding year, as Maternal Health Awareness Month in Virginia.*

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, January 29, 2020

Agreed to by the Senate, March 3, 2020

WHEREAS, preventable maternal and infant mortality and morbidity affects women and their families in all jurisdictions in the United States; and

WHEREAS, maternal mortality is measured as the death of a woman while pregnant, or within 42 days of the end of pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management that is not accidental or incidental; and

WHEREAS, data indicates that preventable maternal mortality associated with multiple forms of discrimination is improved by the use of midwives, doulas, and home visitor programs; and

WHEREAS, the United States is the only industrialized country with a rising maternal mortality ratio and is ranked fourth globally for its maternal mortality rate; meanwhile, maternal mortality is also occurring at higher rates in Virginia in the most recent years with available data; and

WHEREAS, from 2012 to 2014, the maternal mortality rate for all women in Virginia hovered between 11.7 and 17.5 deaths per 100,000 live births, but from 2015 to 2017, maternal mortality rates ranged from 31 to 46.9 deaths per 100,000 live births; and

WHEREAS, from 2012 to 2017, African American women had higher rates of maternal mortality than the state average every year, with maternal mortality rates ranging from 22.9 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2012 to 90.8 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2016; and

WHEREAS, though there has been a slight improvement in maternal mortality rates for all women in Virginia in recent years, the maternal mortality rate of 40.1 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2017 is still five times higher than the rate from a decade ago, when there were 7.8 deaths per 100,000 live births; and

WHEREAS, maternal and infant mortality are exacerbated by factors such as poverty, gender inequality, age, multiple forms of discrimination, lack of access to adequate health facilities, inadequate technology, and lack of infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, considerable racial disparities in pregnancy-related mortality exist, with deaths per live birth for black women nearly three times higher than such deaths for white women; the root cause of these disparities is longstanding structural racism, which has contributed to poorer health outcomes among communities of color; and

WHEREAS, nearly half of all pregnancy-associated deaths in Virginia occurred among the residents of 12 localities, including the Cities of Chesapeake, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Richmond, Roanoke, and Virginia Beach and the Counties of Chesterfield, Fairfax, Henrico, and Pulaski; and

WHEREAS, reducing infant and maternal mortality will require a multifaceted, comprehensive national strategy, including access to health coverage; access to a continuum of prevention and intervention services for all women, infants, and families; access to high-quality, patient-centered care; and investments in prevention and public health throughout communities; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth is committed to better understanding the root causes of pregnancy-related and pregnancy-associated deaths, identifying ways to improve maternal care and maternal health outcomes, reducing infant mortality, and improving the health of pregnant women; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly designate July, in 2020 and in each succeeding year, as Maternal Health Awareness Month in Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates transmit a copy of this resolution to the Virginia Department of Health so that members of the agency may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia in this matter; and, be it

RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates post the designation of this month on the General Assembly's website.

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