

MEDICAL SOCIETY
of the
STATE OF NEW YORK

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Division of Governmental Affairs
MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT

**On Senate Finance Committee
Agenda**

S. 1819 (RIVERA)

On Assembly Floor (Cal. 64)

A. 3276-A (JOYNER)

An act to amend the public health law, in relation to maternal mortality review boards and the maternal mortality and morbidity advisory council

This legislation establishes the Maternal Mortality Review Board for the purposes of reviewing data and information related to maternal mortality and morbidity. For each maternal death reviewed, the Board shall assess the cause of death and analyze any possible preventable factors in order to develop strategies for reducing the risks of harm and death. **The Medical Society of the State of New York supports this measure.**

New York currently ranks 30th out of 50 states in maternal death rate, which is compounded by significant racial and ethnic disparities. Black women are nearly four times as likely to die during pregnancy and childbirth as are white women. Severe maternal morbidity – serious life-threatening complications of delivery – is also more pervasive in women of color. Significant socioeconomic disparities also exist; according to the New York State Department of Health, in 2012-13, 67% of maternal deaths were among women who were insured through the Medicaid program. In addition, NYS DOH indicates that life-threatening complications of delivery are also highest among women living in high poverty neighborhoods and women with an underlying chronic condition such as high blood pressure, diabetes, or heart disease have a threefold likelihood of experiencing severe maternal morbidity as women with no chronic conditions.

The creation of a maternal mortality review board will assist the state in developing and creating new strategies to improve maternal health and lessen the impact of maternal mortality and morbidity. Under this legislation the review board would allow multidisciplinary experts to conduct a review process of causes of maternal death, factors leading to death, preventability and opportunities for intervention. It also would require the board to report aggregate findings and recommendations in order to share best practices on the prevention of maternal deaths.

The legislation also embraces national best practices on maternal health and ensures accountability and sustainability of a maternal review board. It ensures that the board is diverse, multi-disciplinary and includes experts who serve and are representative of the diversity of women in medically underserved areas of the state. It also ensures confidentiality protections regarding the board's proceeding and requires the board to report on its aggregate findings and recommendations.

Maternal mortality is an important public health issue that must be addressed and it is critical for the NYS Legislature to act by creating this board in statute. **The Medical Society of the State of New York supports this measure and urges that this measure be passed.**

Respectfully submitted,

Division of Governmental Affairs

Pfc/support
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