

City of Detroit

CITY COUNCIL

GABRIELA SANTIAGO-ROMERO
COUNCIL MEMBER, DISTRICT 6

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Colleagues

THRU: Council Member Mary Sheffield, Council President

FROM: Council Member Gabriela Santiago-Romero 

DATE: March 24, 2023

RE: Black Maternal Health Week

The Office of Council Member Gabriela Santiago-Romero was asked by Mothering Justice to introduce a resolution recognizing the week of April 11th – 17th as Black Maternal Health Week on behalf of City Council.

BY COUNCIL MEMBER GABRIELA SANTIAGO-ROMERO

RESOLUTION TO RECOGNIZE APRIL 11 – 17, 2023 AS BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH WEEK

- WHEREAS** The mission of the Detroit City Council is to promote the economic, cultural and physical welfare of Detroit’s citizens through Charter-mandated legislative functions; and
- WHEREAS** Maternal mortality rates in the United States are among the highest of any member country of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development and increasing rapidly, from 20.1 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2019 to 32.9 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2021; and
- WHEREAS** The U.S. has the highest maternal mortality rate among affluent countries, in part because of the disproportionate mortality rate of Black women and span across all income levels, education levels, and socioeconomic status; and
- WHEREAS** According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Black women in the United States are 2.6 times more likely than white women to die from pregnancy-related causes; and Black women in the United States suffer from life-threatening pregnancy complications, known as “maternal morbidities”, twice as often as white women, and are 49 percent more likely than all other women to deliver prematurely; and
- WHEREAS** COVID-19, which has disproportionately harmed Black Americans, is associated with an increased risk of adverse pregnancy outcomes and maternal and neonatal complications, further highlighting issues within the broken health care system in the United States and the harm of the system to Black women and birthing persons;
- WHEREAS** Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has indicated that since the COVID-19 pandemic began, the maternal mortality rate for Black women has increases by 26 percent;
- WHEREAS** Structural racism, gender oppression, and the social determinants of health inequities experienced by Black women and birthing persons in the United States significantly contribute to the disproportionately high rates of maternal mortality and morbidity among Black women and birthing persons;
- WHEREAS** Racism and discrimination play a consequential role in maternal health care experiences and outcomes of Black birthing persons;
- WHEREAS** Black midwives, doulas, perinatal health workers, and community-based organizations provide holistic maternal care but face structural and legal barriers to licensure, reimbursement, and provisions of care;
- WHEREAS** A fair and wide distribution of resources and birth options, especially with regard to reproductive health care services and maternal health programming, is critical to closing the racial gap in maternal health outcomes;
- WHEREAS** Even as there is growing concern about improving the access to mental health services, Black women are least likely to have access to mental health screenings, treatment, and support

before, during and after pregnancy;

WHEREAS Black pregnant and postpartum workers are disproportionately denied reasonable accommodations in the workplace, leading to adverse pregnancy outcomes;

WHEREAS Black pregnant women disproportionately experience surveillance and punishment, including shackling incarcerated people in labor, drug testing mothers and infants without informed consent, separating mothers from their newborns, and criminalizing pregnancy outcomes;

WHEREAS, Justice-informed, culturally congruent models of care are beneficial to Black women; and
NOW, THEREFORE, IT BE

RESOLVED That the Detroit City Council recognizes that Black women are experiencing high, disproportionate rates of maternal mortality and morbidity in the United States as unacceptable, and in order to better mitigate the effects of systemic and structural racism, all levels of government must work toward ensuring that the Black community has –

1. Safe and affordable housing;
2. Transportation equity;
3. Nutritious food;
4. Clean air and water, and environments free from toxins;
5. Fair treatment within the criminal justice system;
6. Safety and freedom from violence;
7. A living wage and equal economic opportunity;
8. A sustained workforce pipeline for diverse perinatal professionals; and
9. Comprehensive, high-quality, holistic, and affordable health care with access to the full spectrum of reproductive care, including maternal health and the full postpartum period up to at least 1 year after giving birth free of discrimination and regardless of incarceration;

RESOLVED That the Detroit City Council fully supports and encourages policies grounded in the human rights, reproductive justice, and birth justice frameworks that address black maternal health inequity, and that Black women and birthing person must be active participants in the policy decisions that impact their lives;

RESOLVED That the Detroit City Council recognizes April 11 – 17, 2023 as “Black Maternal Health Week” and as an opportunity to

1. Deepen the national conversation about Black maternal health in the United States;
2. Amplify community-driven policy, research, and care solutions;
3. Center the voices of Black mothers, women, families, and stakeholders;
4. Provide a national platform for Black-led entities and efforts on maternal health, birth, and reproductive justice; and
5. Enhance community organizing on Black maternal health.

RESOLVED That copies of this resolution be forwarded to the offices of the City Clerk, the Mayor, the Detroit delegation in the Michigan legislature, and the United States Congressional delegations from Michigan.