

BACKGROUND

The United States has the highest rate of pregnancy-related mortality of any high-income country¹ and the majority of these deaths are preventable.² There are also significant racial and ethnic disparities in outcomes: the maternal mortality rates for Black and Native Americans are 2-4 times higher the rate for white Americans,³ and studies show that Hispanic⁴ and AAPI⁵ people also experience elevated rates of maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity.

To better understand the drivers of adverse maternal health outcomes and inequities, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) launched the *Implementing a Maternal health and PRegnancy Outcomes Vision for Everyone (IMPROVE) Initiative*, which supports research focused on reducing preventable causes of maternal deaths and improving health before, during, and after delivery, including a special emphasis on maternal health disparities.⁶

Despite the important maternal health research funded by the NIH IMPROVE Initiative, this critical program is currently not authorized in statute and lacks a sustained funding source. Congresswoman Lauren Underwood's **NIH IMPROVE Act** will authorize the IMPROVE Initiative and provide the robust funding stream that will be required to carry out life-saving research.

SUMMARY

The **NIH IMPROVE Act** would authorize \$30 million per year for the *Implementing a Maternal health and PRegnancy Outcomes Vision for Everyone (IMPROVE) Initiative* at NIH, ensuring a steady funding stream for IMPROVE Initiative research to:

- Address the foremost causes of maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity in the United States.
- Inform the development and expansion of tailored, evidence-based perinatal programs to promote maternal health equity across the country.
- Identify biological, behavioral, sociocultural, and structural factors that contribute to disparities in maternal health and delays or disruptions in maternal care.
- Investigate the potential effects of emerging infections, such as COVID-19, on pregnancy-related deaths and complications in different geographic regions and communities.
- Support the development of technologies, tools, devices, and interventions that predict or diagnose risk for maternal morbidity and mortality, reduce preventable causes of maternal deaths and improve health with a focus on mitigating maternal health disparities.

CONTACT

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¹ NIH Office of Research on Women's Health: [Maternal Morbidity and Mortality](#)

² CDC: [Pregnancy-Related Deaths in the United States](#)

³ NICHD: Infographic: [Accelerating Research to Prevent Maternal Morbidity and Mortality \(MMM\): At-A-Glance](#)

⁴ Howell et al.: [Severe Maternal Morbidity Among Hispanic Women in New York City: Investigation of Health Disparities](#)

⁵ Siddiqui et al.: [Increased Perinatal Morbidity and Mortality Among Asian American and Pacific Islander Women in the United States](#)

⁶ NIH: [IMPROVE Initiative](#)