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CHA Statement on March of Dimes 2023 Report Card on Maternal and Infant Health

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA) released a statement Friday reacting to the March of Dimes 2023 Report Card on “The State of Maternal and Infant Health for American Families.”

“Persistent challenges in the health of children and a troubling rise in maternal mortality underscore the critical urgency for Congress to advance public policy solutions to help address this crisis,” **said Sr. Mary Haddad, RSM, President and CEO of CHA.** “CHA has been a leader in supporting solutions for policymakers to partner with providers to proactively address health disparities because caring for women and children is central to the mission of Catholic hospitals, which deliver approximately half a million babies each year and invest in innovative programs, community impact initiatives and charitable care to improve health outcomes in the hundreds of communities they serve.”

The March of Dimes [report card](#) gave the nation a D+ score for its preterm birth rate and highlighted that infant and maternal mortality “are on the rise.”

Catholic health care providers are committed to resolving these troubling trends through community work to improve access to quality health care for underserved communities and advocacy on public policy solutions to address key social determinants of health.

Today, Catholic hospitals provide a wide range of high-quality prenatal, obstetric and postnatal services for women and infants. With 300 hospitals offering obstetric services and staffing over 3,500 neonatal and pediatric intensive care beds, Catholic health care remains committed to caring for our youngest and most vulnerable patients and their mothers.

That commitment includes investments in community impact and charitable care to improve access to critical health services for underserved communities, as well as innovations in care delivery for women and children. For example, Catholic health care providers have launched programs to [strengthen](#) communication during childbirth to improve the patient experience and achieve better health outcomes, offer specialized care to improve outcomes for expectant mothers with [substance abuse](#) disorders and [mental health](#) conditions, and many other innovative programs to support moms and babies.

Catholic health care's committed public policy advocacy has also resulted in several recent successes, including making the option for states to expand Medicaid postpartum care for one year permanent, increasing funding for the Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant and continuing to support the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program.

However, as this latest evidence underscores, more work needs to be done. Maternal death rates in the United States remain up to ten times higher than the rates of some other high-income countries. Furthermore, there is an alarming racial disparity, with the maternal death rate among Black Americans being much higher than that among other racial groups; in 2021 it was 69.9 per 100,000, which is 2.6 times higher than the rate for White women. As the March of Dimes report card highlights, "maternal deaths are on the rise, with the rate doubling between 2018 to 2021."

Congress must act to ensure that these concerning trends do not continue. Catholic health care views the following bills to address the social determinants of health as essential federal counterparts to our work at the community level to support the health of mothers and babies:

- **H.R. 3305/ S. 1606 the Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act** – Introduced by Rep. Underwood (D-IL), Rep. Adams (D-NC), and Sen. Booker (D-NJ) – This comprehensive legislation would make critical investments in the social determinants of health, address behavioral health needs, cultural competency, gaps in the perinatal workforce and bolster the collection of data to address every driver of maternal mortality, morbidity and disparities in the United States.
- **H.R. 3838/ S. 2415 the Preventing Maternal Deaths Reauthorization Act of 2023** — Introduced by Rep. Burgess (R-TX) and Sen. Capito (R-WV) – This bipartisan and bicameral legislation would reauthorize federal support for state-based maternal mortality review committees, which review pregnancy-related deaths to identify causes and make recommendations to prevent future mortalities.
- **H.R. 5568/ S. 2846 the CARE for Moms Act** — Introduced by Rep. Kelly (D-IL) and Sen. Durbin (D-IL) – This legislation would support the maternal health workforce while promoting access to prenatal and postpartum care, including in rural areas.

Learn more about Catholic health care's commitment to strengthening maternal health [HERE](#).

Learn more about solutions to improve health care for moms and children [HERE](#).

Read more about CHA and the mission of Catholic health care [HERE](#).

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The Catholic Health Association of the United States is the national leadership organization of the Catholic health ministry, representing the largest nonprofit provider of health care services in the nation.

- *1 in 7 patients in the U.S. is cared for in a Catholic hospital each day.*

- *Catholic health care, which includes more than 2,200 hospitals, nursing homes, long-term care facilities, systems, sponsors, and related organizations, serves the full continuum of health care across our nation.*
- *Learn more at www.chausa.org.*