

October 7, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
H-232, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Democratic Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader Schumer,

The undersigned represent more than 50 reproductive justice organizations and Black policy leaders committed to advancing Black maternal health through critical policy change. We applaud the investments in the House of Representatives' Build Back Better Act text, which help address the deep inequities Black women and birthing people<sup>1</sup> experience. We urge you to continue your commitment to health and racial equity by including the resources in the Build Back Better Act that has advanced in the House in full in the final package.

As groups and individuals, we are committed to reproductive justice and birth justice. Reproductive justice is a Black feminist framework, defined as the human right to maintain personal bodily autonomy, have children, not have children, and parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities.<sup>2</sup> Birth justice is realized when women and trans people are empowered during pregnancy, labor, childbirth, and postpartum to make healthy decisions for themselves and their infants.<sup>3</sup> In accordance with these frameworks, we are writing to express our shared support for the following priorities:

- **Coverage for Black Women and Birthing People:** Black women and birthing people deserve access to high-quality health insurance coverage that ensures continuity of care, regardless of the type of insurance they hold. At least one third of maternal deaths happen after the end of pregnancy and nearly one quarter of pregnancy-related deaths happen more than six weeks postpartum. In the postpartum period, new parents can face a range of medical challenges, such as pregnancy-related complications, chronic conditions, or postpartum depression--all while caring for a newborn. Despite these risks, current pregnancy-related Medicaid requires states to provide coverage for only 60 days after the end of pregnancy. The extension of Medicaid postpartum coverage from 60 days to 12 months will increase access to health care, particularly for Black, Brown, and Indigenous people who are disproportionately uninsured or underinsured, and who experience inequitable outcomes.

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<sup>1</sup> The phrase 'birthing people' is used to be inclusive of all people who give birth, regardless of gender identity.

<sup>2</sup> SisterSong: Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective. "What is Reproductive Justice?" <https://www.sistersong.net/reproductive-justice>. Accessed 24 Sept. 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Black Women Birthing Justice. "What is Birth Justice?" <http://www.blackwomenbirthingjustice.org/what-is-birth-justice>. Accessed 24 Sept. 2021.

- Centering Racial Equity in Maternal Health Investments:** The Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act is a blueprint to direct resources that can address the ongoing maternal health crisis that disproportionately harms Black women and birthing people. The Momnibus was developed based on the experiences and expertise of Black maternal health providers, patients, birthworkers, and advocates. It comprehensively addresses the driver of our nation’s unconscionable inequities in maternal health: racism. We commend the inclusion of the Momnibus investments that provide necessary funding to address social determinants of health, support community-based organizations working to promote maternal health equity, and grow the Black perinatal workforce, among other critical supports to improve Black maternal health. **We urge Congress to maintain these provisions in the final Build Back Better package so President Biden can sign these maternal health priorities into law.**

The inclusion of critical maternal health resources in the House Build Back Better package is a meaningful effort to address the ongoing maternal health crisis, driven by historical and structural racism in health care. The inclusion of both mandatory, permanent yearlong Medicaid coverage postpartum and the Momnibus investments are critically necessary for Black women, birthing people, and their families to not only survive, but also thrive. Together, we urge the Senate to prioritize Black women and birthing people’s lives across the country by keeping these fundamental provisions in the final reconciliation package.

Sincerely,

Black Maternal Health Federal Policy Collective<sup>4</sup>

ACCESS Reproductive Justice

Ancient Song Doula Services

Atlanta Doula Collective, Inc.

Baobab Birth Collective

Birthing Cultural Rigor, LLC

Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI)

Black Feminist Future

Black Girl's Guide to Surviving Menopause

Black Mamas Matter Alliance

Black Women Birthing Justice

Black Women for Wellness

Black Women's Health Imperative

Blkfeminst Consulting

Caitlin R. Williams, MSPH

Chocolate Milk Café National Inc

CinnaMoms

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<sup>4</sup> *The Black Maternal Health Federal Policy Collective is a group of Black women policy leaders working to develop strategy and policy solutions to address America’s Black Maternal Health Crisis. Each member represents national and community-based organizations centering Black and Indigenous women in their maternal health work. Members include: Dr. Jamila Taylor, Dr. Jamila Perritt, Breana Lipscomb, Jennie Jacoby, Jamille Fields Allsbrook, Kavelle Christie, Venicia Gray, Aza Nedhari, Denys Symonette Mitchell, Clarke Wheeler, Camille Kidd, Miranda Badgette, Osub Ahmed, Raven Freeborn, Dr. Dawn Godbolt, and Renee Nickelson.*

Dana Davis  
Diversity Uplifts, Inc.  
Dorothy E. Roberts, George A. Weiss University Professor of Law & Sociology  
Feminist Women's Health Center  
Health Equity Resources & Strategies (H.E.R.S), LLC  
In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda  
Interfaith Voices for Reproductive Justice (IVRJ)  
Majaica, LLC  
Mamatoto Village, Inc.  
Medical Students for Choice  
Mississippi Black Women's Roundtable  
National Birth Equity Collaborative  
National Black Midwives Alliance  
National Network of Abortion Funds  
New Voices for Reproductive Justice  
Nicole Clark Consulting, LLC  
Onyema Obieka / Policy Analyst Black Women for Wellness Action Project  
Original BlackPrint  
Rev. Deneen Robinson  
Shades Of Blue Project  
SisterLove, Inc.  
SisterReach  
Southern Birth Justice Network  
State Senator Tiara Mack (RI)  
The Afiya Center  
The Bloom Collective  
The Moore-O'Neal Law Group, LLC  
The New Mexico Birth Equity Collaborative  
Theodore R Mitchell