

June 6, 2017

Governor Greg Abbott
Office of the Governor
State Insurance Building
1100 San Jacinto
Austin, Texas 78701

Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick
Room 2E.13
P.O. Box 12068
Austin, TX 78711

The Honorable Joe Straus
Room 2W.13
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, TX 78768

Dear Governor Abbott, Lt. Gov. Patrick, and Speaker Straus,

As organizations dedicated to the health and well-being of Texas families, we welcome the Governor's decision to add maternal mortality to the special session of the 85th Texas Legislature. While many important legislative proposals on this topic failed to pass during the regular session and deserve consideration, it is of particular importance the legislature act quickly to extend the Maternal Mortality & Morbidity Task Force's current expiration date of September 1, 2019 to at least September 1, 2023.

As you know, Texas leads the country in the rate of women who die from pregnancy-related causes.ⁱ Last summer, the Task Force released its initial findings on the too-high rates of death and morbidity among Texas's moms, which showed that many of these deaths occurred from treatable or preventable conditions.ⁱⁱ Regional and ethnic disparities were also found,ⁱⁱⁱ signaling communities at greater risk and communities in need of additional supports. Overall, the message from this report is clear: much more is needed.

The Task Force is made up of the leading minds on maternal health in our state – our state is lucky to have dedicated experts on this Task Force ranging from researchers, state epidemiologist, and physicians specializing in obstetrics and maternal fetal medicine. It is vital that we ensure these experts are able to effectively continue their work to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity in Texas in coordination with the state. Recognizing the critical need to continue the Task Force's work, the Legislature advanced several bipartisan measures to extend the life of the Task Force to 2023. Unfortunately, none of these proposals were sent to your desk, with one proposal falling through in the last two days of session.

Swift, meaningful action to address maternal mortality during the special session will be an important step in advancing the state's work to support mothers, children, and communities across our state.

Sincerely,

Center for Public Policy Priorities
Children at Risk
Children's Defense Fund-Texas
Healthy Futures of Texas
March of Dimes
Mental Health America of Greater Houston
National Alliance on Mental Illness-Texas
National Association of Social Workers-Texas
Pregnancy and Postpartum Health Alliance of Texas
Texans Care for Children
Young Invincibles

ⁱ MacDorman, Marian et. al, Recent Increases in the U.S. Maternal Mortality Rate: Disentangling Trends from Measurement Issues, *Obstetrics & Gynecology*, Vol. 128, No. 3 (2016).

ⁱⁱ Department of State Health Services, Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Task Force and Department of State Health Services Joint Biennial Report, 1, July 2016, <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/mch/pdf/2016BiennialReport.pdf>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.