



July 31st, 2023

Governor Brad Little

Director Dave Jeppesen, Idaho Department of Health and Welfare

Idaho Senate Majority Leader Kelly Arthur Anthon (District 27)

Idaho Senate Minority Leader Melissa Wintrow (District 19)

Idaho House Majority Leader Megan Blanksma (District 23)

Idaho House Minority Leader Ilana Rubel (District 18)

Senator Julie VanOrden (District 30), Chair of the Idaho Senate Committee on Health and Welfare

Senator Glenneda Zuiderveld (District 24), Vice Chair of the Idaho Senate Committee on Health and Welfare

Representative John Vander Woude (District 22), Chair of the Idaho House Committee on Health and Welfare

Representative Marco Adam Erickson (District 33), Vice Chair of the Idaho House Committee on Health and Welfare

U.S. Senator Mike Crapo

U.S. Senator Jim Risch

U.S. Representative Russ Fulcher (ID-1)

U.S. Representative Mike Simpson (ID-2)

**RE: Urgent Concern - Sunsetting of Maternal Mortality Review Committee in Idaho**

To the Policymakers of Idaho,

We are writing to express our profound concern regarding the recent decision to sunset the Maternal Mortality Review Committee (MMRC) in Idaho, effective July 1, 2023. The MMRC has played a crucial role in monitoring and understanding pregnancy-related complications leading to maternal deaths in the state, and its absence poses significant challenges to maternal health and well-being.

We are the nation's leading women's healthcare organizations, representing over 4.5 million providers nationwide who are dedicated to women's and maternal health and the well-being of individuals across their entire lifespans.

Maternal mortality is a pressing issue nationwide, and Idaho is not immune to this crisis. Women in America are dying at a higher rate from pregnancy-related causes than in any other

developed nation.<sup>1</sup> Pregnancy-related deaths occur during pregnancy, delivery and throughout the first year postpartum, with over half occurring between 7 days and one year post birth. Over 80% of these deaths are preventable.<sup>2</sup> A report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) counted 1,205 U.S. women who died of maternal causes in 2021, compared with 861 in 2020 and 754 in 2019.<sup>3</sup>

The upsurge in maternal deaths demands comprehensive efforts to address the root causes and improve the quality of maternal care. The MMRC provides valuable insights into pregnancy-related fatalities, identifying contributing factors, and developing evidence-based recommendations to enhance care practices and policies.

As healthcare professionals, we firmly believe that MMRCs are essential components of maternal care systems. These committees facilitate collaboration among diverse healthcare disciplines and support a multi-dimensional approach to maternal health. By reviewing cases of maternal mortality, MMRCs enable communities and healthcare providers to learn from adverse events, improve care protocols, and take proactive measures to prevent future fatalities. According to Idaho's most recent, and last, Maternal Mortality Review Committee report:

- During 2021, Idaho experienced 17 pregnancy-associated or pregnancy-related maternal deaths, 15 of which were preventable.
- Mental health conditions, including suicide, substance use disorder, overdose, and unintentional injuries were the leading underlying causes of maternal deaths in Idaho, followed by infection and amniotic fluid emboli.
- Lack of knowledge about the significance of a health event or need for treatment and follow-up, lack of access to care, and limited financial resources were the most common contributing factors to these maternal deaths.<sup>4</sup>

Given these concerning statistics and the nationwide maternal mortality crisis, it is paramount to prioritize initiatives that enhance maternal care and support the well-being of pregnant

---

<sup>1</sup> Center for Disease Control. Maternal Mortality Rates in the United States, 2021. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hestat/maternal-mortality/2021/maternal-mortality-rates-2021.htm> Retrieved July 19, 2023, from www.cdc.gov.

<sup>2</sup> Trost SL, Beauregard J, Njie F, et al. Pregnancy-Related Deaths: Data from Maternal Mortality Review Committees in 36 US States, 2017-2019. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, US Department of Health and Human Services; 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Maternal Mortality Rates in the United States, 2021. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hestat/maternal-mortality/2021/maternal-mortality-rates-2021.htm> Retrieved July 19, 2023, from www.cdc.gov.

<sup>4</sup> Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, Division of Public Health, Maternal Mortality Review. (June, 2023). 2021 Maternal Deaths in Idaho: A Report of findings by the Maternal Mortality Review Committee. Available at: <https://publicdocuments.dhw.idaho.gov/WebLink/DocView.aspx?id=26443&dbid=0&repo=PUBLIC-DOCUMENTS>

individuals and their families. The MMRC serves as an invaluable resource to address these challenges head-on, ensuring that no maternal death goes unexamined and that every woman receives the highest standard of care during pregnancy and childbirth.

We, the undersigned organizations, urgently call for reinstating the Maternal Mortality Review Committee in Idaho. We implore you to prioritize the health and wellness of pregnant individuals and communities across the state by recognizing the indispensable role of MMRCs in promoting maternal health.

As healthcare providers, we remain committed to collaborating with policymakers and stakeholders to create evidence-based solutions that address maternal mortality and improve the accessibility and quality of maternal care services. Together, we can work towards a future where everyone receives equitable, comprehensive, and compassionate maternal care.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. We are ready and willing to work alongside you to ensure the safety and well-being of women and birthing individuals in Idaho and across the country.

Sincerely,

The American College of Nurse-Midwives

The American Nurses Association

The Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses

The National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health