



The CARE for Families Act

In the United States, the rate of maternal mortality has more than doubled since 1987,¹ and the rate of severe maternal morbidity has increased by approximately 75% over the past decade.² The infant mortality rate in the United States – 5.9 deaths per 1,000 live births – is also higher than most other developed nations. Cardiovascular disease, preexisting and acquired, is now the leading cause of maternal mortality in pregnancy and the postpartum period, accounting for 26.5% of pregnancy-related deaths in the US.³ Proper prenatal nutrition and appropriate nutrition-based interventions are critical to reducing the risk of heart disease, maternal complications, and infant mortality.⁴

The Community Access to Resources and Education for Families (CARE for Families) Act would make key investments in community health partnerships led by the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and would address maternal and infant mortality and morbidity by ensuring women have access to adequate nutrition before, during, and after pregnancy. Specifically, the CARE for Families Act would create a grant program for local WIC agencies and clinics for community partnership work aimed at:

- Increasing the involvement of WIC staff in the community;
- Improving health outcomes by better connecting WIC to other community health providers, like OB/GYNs, advance practice nurses, and pediatricians;
- Facilitating referrals between WIC and health care providers; and
- Improving the coordination, quality, and cost effectiveness of health care services.

This approach is an important piece of addressing maternal and infant mortality and morbidity. WIC, which provides pregnant and postpartum women, infants, and young children with a healthy food prescription, breastfeeding support, nutrition education, screenings, and referrals, is well-positioned to ensure families are getting the care and resources they need when they need them.

The CARE for Families Act is modeled after a CDC project implemented by the National WIC Association (NWA) in partnership with the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), which found that increasing and enhancing community-clinical linkages between WIC and health care providers helped advance quality nutrition and positive health outcomes for pregnant women, new moms, infants, and young children. The CARE for Families Act is a commonsense investment that would strengthen community health partnerships and build upon WIC's success in protecting and improving the health of women and children.

For more information, please contact Kichelle Webster in Congresswoman Alma S. Adams's office at Kichelle.Webster@mail.house.gov or Caroline Paris-Behr in Congresswoman Lauren Underwood's office at Caroline.Paris-Behr@mail.house.gov.

¹ Berg CJ, Atrash HK, Koonin LM, Tucker M. Pregnancy-related mortality in the United States, 1987-1990. *Obstet Gynecol.* 1996;88(2),161–167.

² Callaghan WM, Creanga AA, Kuklina EV. Severe maternal morbidity among delivery and postpartum hospitalizations in the United States. *External Obstet Gynecol.* 2012;120(5):1029–1036.

³ Creanga AA, Syverson C, Seed K, Callaghan WM. Pregnancy-Related Mortality in the United States, 2011-2013. *Obstet Gynecol.* 2017;130(2),366–373)

⁴ "The Role of Nutrition in Infant Mortality: A Public Health Perspective." *Association of State Public Health Nutritionists*, 2013, asphn.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/The-Roll-of-Nutrition-in-Infant-Mortality-A-Public-Health-Perspective-ASPHN-Brief.pdf.