



# GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Tuesday, October 31, 2023

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Governor's Press Office, [ra-gvgovpress@pa.gov](mailto:ra-gvgovpress@pa.gov)

## **Governor Shapiro Hosts Ceremonial Bill Signing with Legislative Leaders, Advocates, Following Through on Commitment to Address Maternal Mortality in First Year**

*SB 262, now Pennsylvania law, requires data to be gathered more frequently to better inform maternal mortality prevention and intervention in the Commonwealth.*

*Builds on the historic \$2.3 million investment in the 2023-2024 budget to study maternal mortality for the first time in Pennsylvania.*



**Harrisburg, PA** – Today, **Governor Josh Shapiro** joined **Senator Judy Schwank**, **Representative Morgan Cephias**, and lawmakers from the Black Maternal Health Caucus and Women’s Health Caucus for a ceremonial signing of Senator Schwank’s Senate Bill (SB) 262, a new Pennsylvania law that ensures improved access to timely data on maternal health and maternal mortality in Pennsylvania, allowing researchers, doctors, and policymakers to make more informed decisions about medical care for moms and families.

In his budget address in March, Governor Shapiro called for concrete investments to study maternal mortality and put Pennsylvania on an informed path forward; he delivered by securing \$2.3 million to expand maternal health programming in the 2023-2024 budget.

“Improving maternal health is a top priority for my Administration, and today we celebrate taking a vital step forward to better protect moms and babies,” said **Governor Josh Shapiro**. “Across the Commonwealth and throughout the country, rates of maternal mortality are rising, and for Black mothers, that risk is even greater regardless of their income or zip code. Even for the wealthiest Black mothers, their babies are twice as likely to die within the first year. We can’t accept that – and we won’t. To make a real difference for moms and families, we need more data to understand what’s happening here – and how we can help. I was proud to sign this bill into law and I applaud Senator Schwank and Representative Cephias’ leadership in bringing this important legislation to my desk.”

Specifically, SB 262 amends the [Maternal Mortality Review Act](#) to require the Department of Health (DOH) to annually publish severe maternal morbidity data using hospital discharge data obtained from the [PA Health Care Cost Containment Council \(PHC4\)](#). Through rapid data collection and timely information, the goal is to protect women’s health and deliver more transparency into the causes of maternal mortality, especially among Black mothers who often have the highest mortality rates.

SB 262 further requires DOH’s data to be included in the report submitted by Pennsylvania’s Maternal Mortality Review Committee (MMRC) to the General Assembly, healthcare providers and the public. It also requires the MMRC to distribute that report at least once a year instead of every three years.

"Increasingly, Pennsylvania is recognizing alarming maternal morbidity and mortality rates. SB 262 is a significant step in the right direction, providing us with the essential data we need to gain a comprehensive understanding of maternal morbidity within the Commonwealth," **said Sen. Judy Schwank**. "I'm thankful for the unanimous backing SB 262 received from both legislative chambers. I'm hopeful that more bills to improve maternal health outcomes in Pennsylvania will make their way to Gov. Shapiro's desk during this session."

“With the signing of this bill, we finally see severe maternal morbidity complications categorized in a way that will help us to better understand the issue and improve health

outcomes for pregnant and postpartum individuals — moving us a step closer to saving lives in Pennsylvania,” **said Rep. Morgan Cephas**. “I am grateful for everyone who got us to this day, and I look forward to working with my colleagues as a part of the newly formed Black Maternal Health Caucus to build on this moment as we work to advance a series of bills to address the issue.”

The Departments of Health and Human Services (DHS) will play a key role in collecting and publishing these data each year, finally bringing Pennsylvania in line with other states that already collect and distribute this information annually.

“As an obstetric anesthesiologist and a former member of the MMRC, I welcome this news that Pennsylvanians will have more timely and robust data to address the worsening maternal morbidity and mortality crisis. Access to maternal health care is not equitable in Pennsylvania, with both urban and rural communities experiencing gaps, including in Philadelphia where Black women represent 43% of the births but account for 73% of the maternal deaths. This is unacceptable,” **said Department of Human Services Secretary Dr. Val Arkoosh**. “Annual data on severe maternal morbidity and prevention recommendations will support the Administration’s ongoing work to reduce maternal mortality and complements DHS’ ongoing initiatives including expanding Medicaid coverage for a full year postpartum and improving access to doula care.”

“It is a tragedy every time a mother has a major complication or dies from preventable problems associated with pregnancy and the postpartum period,” **said Acting Secretary of Health Dr. Debra Bogen**. “Right now, it occurs far too often, especially among Black mothers. We must use the data to inform the work we do together to improve maternal health and reach our goal of reducing maternal morbidity and mortality across the Commonwealth.”

Pennsylvania joins nearly 40 other states, along with Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico, in passing such requirements on maternal mortality data. There is no additional cost associated with implementing SB 262.

# # #