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Shapiro Administration Highlights Efforts to Improve Care for Pregnant Women and Babies by Tackling Maternal Health Issues

Governor Shapiro's budget proposal increases funding for maternal health, building off the Administration's work to secure state funding to study disparities in maternal health last year.

Pittsburgh – Acting Secretary of Health Dr. Debra Bogen and Second Lady of Pennsylvania Blayre Holmes Davis, along with the Department of Human Services (DHS) and local and state leaders, visited The Midwife Center for Birth & Women's Health today to highlight new Shapiro Administration efforts to address maternal health issues and improve care for pregnant women and children, especially among people of color.

Across the nation, the rate of pregnancy-associated deaths has been on the rise in recent years. In Pennsylvania, there are 82 pregnancy-associated deaths per 100,000 live births. Black women are two times more likely to die during or in the first year after a pregnancy than white women.

"The tragic reality is that maternal mortality is far too common in the U.S. and Pennsylvania, and disproportionately impacts Black women and their families," said **Dr. Bogen**. "Every death of a new mother impacts their entire community, that's why the Shapiro-Davis Administration is fully committed to tackling maternal health issues that are affecting women across the state."

In the current year's budget, Governor Josh Shapiro secured \$2.3 million to study and implement recommendations for preventing maternal mortality. The [2024-25 proposed budget](#) doubles down on that work by investing an additional \$2.7 million to address and prevent maternal mortality, especially among Black mothers.

"The Department of Health is using current funding to support organizations and local coalitions to implement recommendations of the Maternal Mortality Review Committee, focusing on better coordination of physical and behavioral health care and social services. We aim to support programs that specifically address black maternal health so that investments are made respectfully and appropriately to eliminate the unacceptable disparities in maternal health outcomes," said **Dr. Bogen**.

“Last year I met [a doctor from Philadelphia who noted that in her city, Black mothers represent 43 percent of the births, but 73 percent of the deaths](#),” said **Pennsylvania Second Lady Blayre Holmes Davis**. “These are not simply statistics. These are women who left behind families and communities that needed them and are still grieving from an outcome that is very often preventable. The Shapiro-Davis Administration will not accept this as the status quo. I’m so proud that our Administration devoted state budget dollars for the first time to address the public health crisis of maternal mortality, and I’m excited that the new Shapiro-Davis budget proposal doubles down on that work.”

Priorities for the current year funding include launching a new Division of Maternal Health within the Department of Health’s Bureau of Family Health that will support the administration of the [Maternal Mortality Review Committee](#) (MMRC). Approximately \$1.7 million is being allocated to implement recommendations that are set forth by the MMRC to prevent maternal deaths. The Department of Health, in collaboration with the Departments of Human Services and Drug and Alcohol Programs, is planning to issue a Request for Applications (RFA) this spring to provide regional grants that can be used to tailor support for local needs, such as for coalitions or organizations to better coordinate local health care and related services or to provide additional or innovative services.

“There is a critical connection between maternal health, infant health, the health of a family, and of a community. All are dependent on the quality and accessibility of health care in their community and the policies within the state they live,” said **Sara Goulet, senior advisor to the Secretary of Human Services**. “The Shapiro-Davis Administration supports maternal health for all women. We are here today to support the proposed budget that aims to reduce barriers to care and continue our work addressing the Black maternal health crisis in our Commonwealth.”

Established in 1982 by a diverse group of people to provide evidence-based, holistic reproductive health care options, [The Midwife Center](#) (TMC) is the only freestanding birth center licensed and nationally accredited in southwest Pennsylvania. TMC welcomes approximately 400 babies each year.

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