



# City of Chicago



R2018-1240

Office of the City Clerk

## Document Tracking Sheet

**Meeting Date:** 11/14/2018

**Sponsor(s):** Burke (14)  
Dowell (3)

**Type:** Resolution

**Title:** Call for Department of Family and Support Services and Department of Public Health to address City's need and ability to mitigate disparities in maternal mortality within City of Chicago

**Committee(s) Assignment:** Committee on Human Relations

**RESOLUTION**

WHEREAS, the health, safety, and well-being of the City of Chicago's residents are a primary concern for the City Council; and

WHEREAS, protecting mothers is a paramount public health function of the City of Chicago; and

WHEREAS, on October 18, 2018, the United States Surgeon General Jerome Adams spoke at a news conference at the University of Illinois at Chicago's College of Nursing about a report released by the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) finding that African-American women were more likely to die from pregnancy-related conditions; and

WHEREAS, the report was compiled by a committee of health officials, health care providers, and advocates who analyzed 93 cases of women who died in 2015 while pregnant or within one year of pregnancy; and

WHEREAS, according to the report, African-American mothers are six (6) times more likely to die from pregnancy-related conditions; and

WHEREAS, the Illinois Deputy Director of the Health Department's Office of Women's Health and Family Services Shannon Lightner said, "going into this, we knew there was a disparity, but seeing the numbers is alarming;" and

WHEREAS, among the deaths found to be pregnancy-related, there were 72 deaths of non-Hispanic black women per 100,000 live births, 24 deaths of Hispanic women per 100,000 live births, and 11 deaths of non-Hispanic white women per 100,000 live births; and

WHEREAS, the committee found that the majority of the pregnancy-related deaths, 72% to be exact, were preventable; and

WHEREAS, among the preventable pregnancy-related deaths were women who died of blood clots, heart failure, hemorrhages, sepsis, and mental health conditions; and

WHEREAS, the report recounted that after delivering a healthy, full-term baby, Jasmine, an African-American woman in her twenties, visited the emergency room eight times complaining about leg pain she was experiencing and was told to use ice packs; and

WHEREAS, each time Jasmine visited the emergency room the doctors did not screen her for blood clotting issues and misinterpreted her pain as a drug-seeking behavior; and

WHEREAS, the committee noted that Jasmine's experience illustrates the implicit bias or prejudice that can have an impact on the health care received by African American women; and

WHEREAS, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that since 2008 in Illinois, more than 650 women have died of pregnancy-related deaths; and

WHEREAS, the advocates and researchers have noted that racism can increase stress on the body and make women vulnerable when their pain is not taken seriously by the health care providers; and

WHEREAS, the committee's recommendation included having hospitals with emergency departments adopt a clear policy to identify postpartum women and ensure women are connected with a primary care or obstetrics physician for postpartum visits; and

WHEREAS, the committee also recommended creating home-visiting programs to help high-risk mothers, implementing the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists' suggested "fourth trimester" of care, and expanding Medicaid eligibility from 60 days postpartum to one year; and

WHEREAS, the committee encouraged women to inform their health care providers of any new or emerging symptoms whether related to pregnancy or not, including insignificant issues; and

WHEREAS, the Illinois Health Department Director Nirav Shah said that, "Knowing who is dying is the first step toward prevention. What we can predict, we can ultimately prevent;" and

WHEREAS, on May 25, 2018, Aldermen Edward M. Burke and Pat Dowell introduced a resolution calling for the Department of Family and Support Services and the Department of Public Health to appear before members of the City Council to address both the City's need and the ability to mitigate disparities in birth outcomes within the City of Chicago; and

WHEREAS, similarly, now, this City Council seeks to underscore that concern over the health and well-being of our residents must begin earlier than even birth – that caring for new mothers and mothers-to-be protects our well-being for generations to come; and

WHEREAS, in an attempt to support the new mothers in Chicago, the Department of Public Health have recently been handing out packets of information at maternal hospitals; and

WHEREAS, in order to address the disparities and combat maternal mortality, Chicago is committed to prioritizing equality in health care and investing in the health of all residents with a particular focus on mothers; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO:

That the Department of Family and Support Services and the Department of Public Health appear before members of the Committee on Human Relations to address both the City's need and the ability to mitigate disparities in maternal mortality within the City of Chicago.



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Edward M. Burke  
Alderman, 14<sup>th</sup> Ward

Pat Dowell, 3rd