

# Leading Children's Health Advocates Call on Congress to Address Maternal and Child Health



WASHINGTON, DC - (December 1, 2022) Four of the nation's leading advocates for maternal and child health are calling for federal action to reduce the nation's high maternal mortality rate. Nemours Children's Health, March of Dimes, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP), and Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago are seeking congressional measures to improve maternal health during the third annual Hot Topics in Neonatology® Cindy Pellegrini Maternal & Child Health Advocacy Day.

Each year, about 700 women die from complications of pregnancy and childbirth. Even more sobering, an average of 2 babies die every hour. Yet, more than 80% of all pregnancy-related deaths are preventable, according to the CDC. Even when families overcome

obstacles to finding care, women and babies still face poor health outcomes and grave disparities, making the U.S. among the most dangerous developed nation for childbirth. Now more than ever, a multitude of factors are fueling the maternal and infant health crisis, including structural racism, poor maternal health and socio-economic status.

The four children's health advocates are asking Congress to support the Black Maternal Health "Momnibus" Act, the Newborn Screening Saves Lives Act, and the PREEMIE Reauthorization Act. The groups said the legislation would provide better access to high-quality, holistic maternal health care, while also addressing the social, economic, and community drivers of these health disparities.

"The foundation for adult health and well-being is built during childhood, which is why a healthy start is so critical for long-term wellness," said Kara Odom Walker, MD, MPH, MSHS, Executive Vice President and Chief Population Health Officer, Nemours Children's Health. "To successfully create the healthiest generations of children, we need public policy that helps reduce health disparities and barriers to care that impact the mothers and babies we care for."

"We know it takes a community to achieve health care transformation for moms and babies and we're pleased to join with other leading children's health advocates in calling for change," said Stacey Brayboy, Senior Vice President, Public Policy and Government Affairs, March of Dimes. "Our recently released reports show that nearly 7 million women live in maternity care deserts and the preterm birth rate increased to 10.5% in 2021, a 15-year high. The Momnibus, Newborn Screening Saves Lives Reauthorization, and PREEMIE Act Reauthorization are essential bills needed to reverse the disturbing negative trends in maternal and infant health."

"As a neonatologist, I know that when we take better care of mothers, we get healthier babies," said Diana Montoya-Williams, MD, a neonatologist at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP). "The Momnibus, the PREEMIE Act Reauthorization, and the Newborn Screening Saves Lives Act have so many life-saving measures that will not only help make this country safer for both mothers and babies but will also save us healthcare dollars in the future. By supporting these acts, legislators have a real opportunity to partner with communities and healthcare providers, help reverse our worsening preterm birth and maternal mortality rates, and in this way, invest in the health of our country."

"We urge Congress to improve access to maternal and child health care for every mother and child and to address barriers to care so that all moms have the ability to seek equitable, holistic and quality health care for themselves and for their families. This is truly a matter of life and death for women and children in the United States," said Susanna McColley, MD, Attending Physician, Pulmonary Medicine at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago.

The Cindy Pellegrini Maternal & Child Health Advocacy Day is named in honor of Cindy Pellegrini who passed away in 2019. Pellegrini was a widely respected advocate who dedicated her life to improving the health and well-being of children and their families by working to advance federal, state, and local policies on behalf of women and children.

## **About Nemours Children's Health**

*Nemours Children's Health is one of the nation's largest multistate pediatric health systems, which includes two free-standing children's hospitals and a network of more than 70 primary and specialty care practices. Nemours Children's seeks to transform the health of children by adopting a holistic health model that utilizes innovative, safe, and high-quality care, while also caring for the health of the whole child beyond medicine. Nemours Children's also powers the world's most-visited*

website for information on the health of children and teens, Nemours KidsHealth - the Web's most visited site about children's health

Nemours Foundation, established through the legacy and philanthropy of Alfred I. duPont, provides pediatric clinical care, research, education, advocacy, and prevention programs to the children, families and communities it serves. For more information, visit [Nemours.org](https://nemours.org).

**About March of Dimes**

March of Dimes leads the fight for the health of all moms and babies. We support research, lead programs and provide education and advocacy so that every family can have the best possible start. Building on a successful 84-year legacy, we support every pregnant person and every family. To learn more about March of Dimes, please visit [marchofdimes.org](https://marchofdimes.org).

**About Children's Hospital of Philadelphia**

**About Children's Hospital of Philadelphia:** A non-profit, charitable organization, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia was founded in 1855 as the nation's first pediatric hospital. Through its long-standing commitment to providing exceptional patient care, training new generations of pediatric healthcare professionals, and pioneering major research initiatives, the 595-bed hospital has fostered many discoveries that have benefited children worldwide. Its pediatric research program is among the largest in the country. The institution has a well-established history of providing advanced pediatric care close to home through its [CHOP Care Network](https://www.chop.edu/care-network), which includes more than 50 primary care practices, specialty care and surgical centers, urgent care centers, and community hospital alliances throughout Pennsylvania and New Jersey, as well as a [new inpatient hospital](https://www.chop.edu/new-inpatient-hospital) with a dedicated pediatric emergency department in King of Prussia. In addition, its unique family-centered care and public service programs have brought Children's Hospital of Philadelphia recognition as a leading advocate for children and adolescents. For more information, visit <http://www.chop.edu>.

**About Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago**

As a regional specialty hospital, Lurie Children's has the privilege of caring for critically ill and injured children who come to us from every corner of Illinois, 44 other states and 47 countries. We are the largest pediatric provider in the region. Our medical staff includes more than 1,800 physicians and allied health professionals in 70 pediatric specialties.

Promoting the health and well-being of children and adolescents beyond the hospital walls is a critical part of our mission. We advance child health through innovations in the quality, cost and delivery of care—regardless of payer—and serve as a vital safety net for uninsured, underinsured and publicly insured children. For decades, we have served as the region's center for children's health, providing highly specialized pediatric care across large geographic areas.

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