

Black Maternal Mortality



In This Issue

- Black women are three times more likely than white women to die from complications during pregnancy or birth.
- The *Kira Johnson Act* is a bill that intends to prevent black maternal mortality by providing training on maternity care in hopes of reducing and preventing racism, implicit bias, and discrimination in maternity settings.
- Global Foundation for Girls supports the *Kira Johnson Act* by bringing awareness to the intended goals, educating and training organizations on inclusivity, diversity, and cultural competence, and promoting diversity in the healthcare system.

Based on human rights, everyone has the right to adequate health care and necessary social services. However, there are racial disparities in maternal healthcare. Black women are three times more likely than white women to experience complications during pregnancy or birth (Craft-Blacksheare & Kahn, 2023). Often complications lead to death. There are multiple factors that contribute to disparities in maternal healthcare such as quality of service, systematic racism, and implicit bias. Black women often are treated poorly which includes inappropriate resources or interventions. Black women are often thought of to have higher pain tolerance, which contributes to mortality rates. Often when black pregnant women express they are in pain, it's almost always overlooked. Black maternal mortality rates is a prevalent issue in the United States. To address the issue of poor quality care black women receive, racism must be addressed. Promoting cultural competence and sensitivity amongst service providers can potentially help decrease black maternal mortality. Also promoting diversity is essential. The healthcare system needs more black midwives, black doctors, and black doulas which can potentially decrease racial disparities and reduce black maternal mortality rates. In the meantime, white providers should explore their own implicit bias and become more aware of the unique health concerns in black communities.



Reintroduction of the Kira Johnson Act

To combat the current issue of black maternal mortality, *Kira Johnson Act* was reintroduced. This bill intends to prevent black maternal mortality by providing training specifically on maternity care in hopes of reducing and preventing racism, implicit bias, and discrimination in maternity settings. In addition, this bill will provide funding to community-based organizations to improve maternal health outcomes for black pregnant women. This includes offering support, programs, and resources to organizations that work directly with women of color. Furthermore, the *Kira Johnson Act* will provide funding for grant programs to study bias, racism and discrimination in maternity care settings and implement maternal care training within maternity settings. Training will be mandatory to all professionals who come in contact with pregnant women. Training will also include cultural competence, trauma-informed care and anti-racism. Lastly, this bill will provide funding to develop compliance programs within maternal care settings to provide patients an effective way to report instances of racism or discrimination, thus promoting accountability. With this bill, when patients report instances of racism or discrimination, concerns will be addressed immediately and action will take place, with service providers being held accountable.

Who Will The Kira Johnson Act Impact?

The *Kira Johnson Act* will directly impact women of color. Specifically those living in poor communities, as maternal mortality tends to be highest there. This bill will improve the quality of care black women receive in poorer communities. Also this bill will impact service providers as it intends to educate and train those who come in contact with mothers to promote sensitivity and cultural competence. Although the *Kira Johnson Act* is intended to reduce black maternal mortality, racial disparities in health will always be an issue because racism is so deeply embedded in America's history. This act is a great start in addressing the issue but considering black women are still at greater risk of maternal mortality conveys that more needs to be done. As long as racism exists, black women will never escape poor maternity treatment. This *Kira Johnson Act* should be supported as they are making great effort with addressing racism as they intend to hold service providers accountable for acts of discrimination and racism. This bill will provide funding for organizations to train service providers who are in contact with mothers to ensure they are aware of unique barriers black women face while pregnant and during labor. If service providers are aware of these unique challenges, this can potentially increase their level of care and sensitivity towards black mothers.



Call For Action

Black women deserve equal opportunities and resources. Black women deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. The color of one's skin shouldn't determine the quality of health care services. Pregnancy and postpartum is a very vulnerable period, where mothers should be treated with care. The process of carrying a child for months and birth should be an exciting and happy moment. Rather, many black women are deprived of this joyous experience due to negligence of caregivers and systemic racism. The *Kira Johnson Act* is doing a great job by bringing awareness to the issue of black maternal mortality and addressing systemic racism, implicit bias, and discrimination. Global Foundation for Girls (GFG) supports this bill by bringing awareness to the intended goals. GFG will also support this bill by continuing to educate and train organizations on inclusivity, diversity, and cultural competence. This includes advocacy for birth justice. Lastly, GFG promotes diversity in the healthcare system by collaborating with black midwives, doulas, and social workers to support them as they support their clients.



To join us in our efforts at improving birth justice please visit our website www.globalfoundationforgirls.org. Please consider [donating to GFG](#) so we are able to continue to fight for birth justice and against racism. Check out GFG on all social media platforms @globalfundforgirls to stay updated on the latest news around birth justice.

References

Craft-Blacksheare, M., & Kahn, P. (2023). Midwives' and Other Perinatal Health Workers' Perceptions of the Black Maternal Mortality Crisis in the United States. *Journal of Midwifery & Women's Health*, 68(1), 62-70.

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