



CITY OF HOUSTON

Sylvester Turner

Mayor

P.O. Box 1562
Houston, Texas 77251-1562

Telephone – Dial 311
www.houstontx.gov

July 25, 2017

To the Honorable Members of the Texas Legislature:

I write today in support of legislation to extend the Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Task Force and to call for the Task Force to evaluate options to address the most prevalent causes of maternal death. As Mayor of the fourth largest city in the U.S., I understand that maternal health care urgently needs to be addressed. This is a statewide health crisis that directly impacts thousands of uninsured and low-income minority women in the city of Houston.

According to a study released by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, maternal mortality rates in the United States more than doubled between 2000 and 2014. In Texas, the data is even more striking. After ten years of only modest increases between 2000 and 2010, maternal mortality rate doubled in just two years. The rate of maternal mortality in Texas jumped to 30.2 per 100,000 live births in 2011, then spiked to 38.7 in 2012 and remained above 30 through 2014—a rate significantly higher than the Center for Disease Control's annual national benchmarks over that same period, which ranged from 19.3 in 2011 to 21.5 in 2014. Texas' maternal mortality rate is now the worst in the nation and the cost of every day of inaction is measured in lives.

Much work still needs to be done to directly address the causes of pregnancy-related deaths in Texas and severe maternal morbidity. Improved implementation of a maternal health and safety initiative enacted by collaboration between the Department of State Healthcare Services and health care providers will lead to lower rates of maternal mortality and pregnancy-related health emergencies. In addition, determining the feasibility of adding maternal health and safety protocols and best practices as a measure of quality outcomes will lead to improvements in maternal health for years to come.

This legislation is the first step towards combating this terrible epidemic of maternal mortality. There is a need to redouble efforts to prevent maternal deaths and improve maternity care for the 400,000 women giving birth each year in Texas. Children growing up without a mom is far too steep a price to pay for indifference or inaction. The health of our mothers is directly related to the health of our state and hope for our future, that is what we are fighting for.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Sylvester Turner", is written over a horizontal line.

Sylvester Turner
Mayor, City of Houston