

By Senator Jones

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Senate Resolution

A resolution recognizing April 11 – 17, 2023, as “Black Maternal Health Week” in Florida to bring attention to the maternal health crisis in the black community and the importance of reducing maternal mortality and morbidity among black women in this state.

WHEREAS, the sixth annual National Black Maternal Health Week (BMHW) campaign, founded and led by the Black Mamas Matter Alliance (BMMA), is a week of awareness, activism, and community building, and

WHEREAS, the national campaign strives to raise awareness of the state of black maternal health, the root causes of poor maternal health outcomes, and community-driven policy, program, and care solutions, and

WHEREAS, in 2023, the BMHW theme, “Our Bodies Belong to Us: Restoring Black Autonomy and Joy,” reflects BMMA’s work in centering black women’s scholarship, maternity care work, and advocacy across the full spectrum of sexual, maternal, and reproductive health care, services, programs, and initiatives, and

WHEREAS, the campaign also serves as a national platform for black women-led entities and efforts on maternal health, birth justice, and reproductive justice, including African immigrant and Afro-Latin groups, and aims to enhance community organizing on black maternal health through community conversations, events, and outreach, and

WHEREAS, according to the Centers for Disease Control and

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30 Prevention, black women in the United States are 2.6 times more
31 likely than white women to die from pregnancy-related causes,
32 and

33 WHEREAS, black women in the United States suffer from life-
34 threatening pregnancy complications, known as maternal
35 morbidities, twice as often as white women, and

36 WHEREAS, COVID-19 dramatically worsened this nation's
37 maternal mortality crisis, with maternal death rates increasing
38 40 percent in 2021 compared to the previous year, and

39 WHEREAS, maternal mortality rates in the United States are
40 among the highest of any member country of the Organization for
41 Economic Cooperation and Development and are increasing rapidly,
42 from 17.4 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2018 to 32.1 deaths
43 per 100,000 live births in 2021, and

44 WHEREAS, the United States has the highest maternal
45 mortality rate among affluent countries, in part because of the
46 disproportionate mortality rate of black women, and

47 WHEREAS, the rate of preterm birth among black women is
48 nearly 50 percent higher than the preterm birth rate among white
49 or Hispanic women, with the high rates of infant mortality among
50 black women spanning all income and education levels and every
51 socioeconomic status, and

52 WHEREAS, the maternal mortality rate in this state was
53 significantly higher for black and other women of color than for
54 white women, with 69.9 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births
55 among black and other women of color and 26.6 maternal deaths
56 per 100,000 live births among white women, and

57 WHEREAS, structural racism, gender oppression, and the
58 social determinants of health inequities experienced by black

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59 women in this state significantly contribute to the
60 disproportionately high rates of maternal mortality and
61 morbidity among black women, and

62 WHEREAS, racism and discrimination play a consequential
63 role in maternal health care experiences and outcomes of black
64 women, and

65 WHEREAS, a fair and wide distribution of resources and
66 birth options, especially with regard to reproductive health
67 care services and maternal health programming, is critical to
68 closing the racial gap in maternal health outcomes, and

69 WHEREAS, black midwives, doulas, perinatal health workers,
70 and community-based organizations provide holistic maternal care
71 but face structural and legal barriers to licensure,
72 reimbursement, and provision of care, and

73 WHEREAS, COVID-19, which has disproportionately harmed
74 black Americans, is associated with an increased risk of adverse
75 pregnancy outcomes and maternal and neonatal complications, and

76 WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted
77 issues within the broken health care system in this state and
78 the disproportionate harm it causes to black women, and

79 WHEREAS, data from the Centers for Disease Control and
80 Prevention indicate that black women had the highest rates of
81 maternal deaths related to COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021, at 13.2
82 per 100,000 live births, while the rate among white women was
83 4.5 per 100,000 live births, and

84 WHEREAS, even with growing concern about improving access
85 to mental health services, black women are least likely to have
86 access to mental health screenings, treatment, and support
87 before, during, and after pregnancy, and

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88 WHEREAS, black pregnant and postpartum workers are
89 disproportionately denied reasonable accommodations in the
90 workplace, leading to adverse pregnancy outcomes, and

91 WHEREAS, black pregnant women disproportionately experience
92 surveillance and punishment, including being shackled during
93 labor when incarcerated, drug testing mothers and infants
94 without informed consent, separating mothers from their
95 newborns, and criminalizing pregnancy outcomes, and

96 WHEREAS, justice-informed, culturally congruent models of
97 care are beneficial to black women, and

98 WHEREAS, an investment must be made in maternity care for
99 black women, including support for care led by the communities
100 most affected by the maternal health crisis in this state;
101 continuous health insurance coverage to support black women for
102 the full postpartum period up to at least 1 year after giving
103 birth; and policies that support and promote affordable,
104 comprehensive, and holistic maternal health care that is free
105 from gender and racial discrimination, including care provided
106 to those who are incarcerated, NOW, THEREFORE,

107

108 Be It Resolved by the Senate of the State of Florida:

109

110 That April 11 - 17, 2023, is recognized as "Black Maternal
111 Health Week" in Florida to bring attention to the maternal
112 health crisis in the black community in this state and the
113 importance of reducing maternal mortality and morbidity among
114 black women.

115 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Black Maternal Health Week be
116 viewed as an opportunity to deepen the conversation in this

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117 state about black maternal health; to amplify community-driven
118 policy, research, and care solutions; to center the voices of
119 black mothers, women, families, and stakeholders; to provide a
120 national platform for black-led entities and efforts on maternal
121 health, birth, and reproductive justice; and to enhance
122 community organizing on black maternal health.

123 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Senate recognizes that
124 black women are experiencing high, disproportionate rates of
125 maternal mortality and morbidity in this state; that these
126 alarmingly high rates of maternal mortality among black women
127 are unacceptable; and that, in order to better mitigate the
128 effects of systemic racism, we must work to ensure that the
129 black community has safe and affordable housing, transportation
130 equity, nutritious food, clean air and water, environments free
131 from toxins, fair treatment within the criminal justice system,
132 safety and freedom from violence, a living wage, equal economic
133 opportunity, a sustained workforce pipeline for diverse
134 perinatal professionals, and comprehensive, high-quality, and
135 affordable health care with access to the full spectrum of
136 reproductive care.

137 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, in order to improve maternal
138 health outcomes, we must fully support and encourage policies
139 grounded in the frameworks of human rights, reproductive
140 justice, and birth justice which address black maternal health
141 inequity, and black women must be active participants in the
142 policy decisions that impact their lives in order to ensure
143 access to safe and respectful maternal health care for black
144 women in this state.