



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Zellnor Myrie

## Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Senator Myrie hold Maternal Health Roundtable Meeting

ZELLNOR MYRIE November 13, 2019

BROOKLYN, N.Y. – This Tuesday, New York State Senator Zellnor Y. Myrie convened a community meeting at SUNY Downstate Hospital to discuss the crisis of maternal mortality in Brooklyn and how to address it.

The meeting was attended by Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Senator Zellnor Y. Myrie, Senator Gustavo Rivera, and 44 additional participants including clinicians, medical providers, community based organizations, maternal health experts, physicians, advocates, doulas, midwives, nurses, and government partners.

“No woman should live in fear of receiving inadequate care during one of life’s most precious moments simply because she is black,” said State Senator Myrie. “There is no excuse for allowing women to die due to lack of care, lack of resources, and preventable complications. I am proud that the legislature has taken action to address this crisis, but there is much more work to do.”

Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins said, “Maternal deaths and severe maternal morbidity rates are rising in New York, and are especially high among women of color. This is unacceptable and we have a responsibility to address this crisis. I applaud Senator Zellnor Myrie for organizing the maternal health roundtable and tour of the SUNY Downstate

Health Sciences Campus. The Senate Democratic Majority will continue taking action to protect new mothers' health and lives."

"I commend Senator Myrie for bringing together stakeholders to address maternal health outcomes. Our state and especially the boroughs we both serve are facing a dire crisis for pregnant mothers and Black women in particular, who are much more likely to face complications when giving birth," said State Senator Gustavo Rivera, Chair of the Senate Health Committee. "I am proud that this year I was able to pass bills to establish Maternal Mortality Review Boards and require hospitals to set protocols to address obstetric hemorrhage. This effort acknowledged the urgent need to reduce mortality rates, but it's just one step forward. With dedicated partners like Senator Myrie, I know that finding solutions that save women's lives will continue to be a priority."

Photos of the event, courtesy of SUNY Downstate, can be found [here](#).

This year, the enacted state budget included \$8 million over two years to support Taskforce recommendations, including the Maternal Mortality Review Board and Maternal Mortality Advisory Council. This bill was sponsored in the Senate by Senator Gustavo Rivera, Chairman of the Senate Health Committee, who was also in attendance at the meeting.

In addition, the budget included \$2 million through the Department of Health's Maternal Infant Community Health Collaborative to be used to increase access to community health workers in high risk areas statewide.

The rate of maternal mortality is on the rise in the U.S. and is highest among black women, who are 3.5 times as likely to die during pregnancy or childbirth as white women.

These health disparities are even more pronounced in certain areas of Brooklyn, many of which are in Senator Myrie's district, such as East Flatbush, which according to the NYC

Dept. of Health, has one of the highest infant mortality rates in New York City.

During the roundtable, this wide range of stakeholders discussed how community based providers, hospitals, and government can work together in collaboration to address the high rates of maternal mortality and morbidity in our communities with a focus on Brooklyn. The discussion addressed both community-based solutions and larger systemic changes needed within hospital and medical systems to improve maternal health outcomes.

Organizations present at the roundtable included:

- SUNY Downstate
- Brooklyn Perinatal Network
- Kings County Hospital
- NYC Dept of Health & Mental Hygiene
- Caribbean Women's Health Association
- ACOG District II
- Northwell Health
- NYS DOH
- Ancient Doula Song
- Midwives Association
- Brooklyn Birthing Center
- CAMBA
- Brookdale Hospital
- Background info about maternal mortality:

The number of reported maternal mortalities in New York has increased from 15.4 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2001-2003 to 19.6 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2014-2016. The United States rate more than doubled during this time.

While maternal mortality has fallen globally, it has increased in the U.S., which ranks 46th among developed countries.

In the U.S., the rate of maternal mortality is about 20 deaths per 100,000 mothers, but the rate is much worse among black women. (42 deaths per 100,000 live births for black non-Hispanics as compared to 12 deaths per 100,000 live births for white non-Hispanics.

New York ranks 30th out of 50 states in its maternal death rates.

Black mothers are 3.5 times as likely as whites to die during pregnancy and childbirth due to pregnancy associated causes.

Many causes contribute to these disparities, including health care and social determinants of health. Addressing this issue comprehensively at both the state and local community level with a wide variety of stakeholders working in partnership will be one of the most effective ways to dramatically reduce New York's maternal death rate.

###