

Oral Testimony for the New York State Senate Committee on Health**Dr. Shani R. Scott****Physician, Assistant Professor of Medicine**

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Good morning, Chairperson and esteemed members of the New York State Senate Committee on Health. Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today.

I come before you not only as a physician but as a witness to a quiet crisis that has persisted in the Bronx and across our state for generations. A crisis that is not sudden, not unforeseen, but the predictable consequence of a system built on exclusion—one that has determined, by policy and neglect, who lives and who is left behind.

In the Bronx, where I have served for nearly a decade, Black women are dying from pregnancy-related causes at 8.4 times the rate of their white counterparts. These women are not numbers. They are mothers who never return home from the delivery room, grandmothers who step in to raise children left without their mothers, partners who grieve the loss of a future they had planned together. These deaths are not accidents of fate. Nearly 70% of them are preventable.

The past has shown us what happens when we do nothing—when systemic failures are met with silence and inaction. But today, we have before us a moral choice. We can decide to do better. We can refuse to accept that a mother's likelihood of surviving childbirth should be determined by her race, language, or her zip code.

The bills before you—**S845, S04969, S04913, S00802, S01226, and their Assembly counterparts**—offer a path forward. They address the structural fractures that have left too many women without access to the care they need, when they need it most. They recognize that extending postpartum Medicaid coverage, integrating primary and obstetric care, and investing in community health centers are not just policy changes but life-saving interventions. They acknowledge that racial bias in maternal healthcare is not incidental—it is embedded in the system itself—and must be actively dismantled.

History will judge us by what we choose to do at this moment. Will we continue down the same path of incremental measures and delayed action? Or will we say, definitively, that in New York State, no mother should die from a preventable cause?



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I urge this committee to champion these bills—not as isolated reforms, but as part of a broader commitment to health and human dignity. I offer my experience, my voice, and my partnership to see these policies realized.

Thank you for your time and for your dedication to building a more just and compassionate healthcare system.

Best regards,

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