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HEALTH  
PROGRAM



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METRO  
CHAPTER

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I am writing this statement on behalf of the New York Metropolitan Chapter of Physicians for a National Health Program (PNHP-NY Metro). My name is Dr. Ashley Duhon, and I am an OBGYN who completed my residency training in the Bronx.

In New York City, we know that black women are up to 12 times more likely to die of pregnancy-related causes as compared to white women. In the Bronx, our patients were at an even heightened vulnerability to complications related to pregnancy. Although spontaneous and unexpected issues can occur during the laboring and actual birthing process, we know that the number one cause of maternal mortality in this country is cardiovascular conditions. Many of these can be detected prior to pregnancy, though may be inadequately treated or go completely undetected simply due to lack of healthcare access. An example of this is undiagnosed high blood pressure or congenital heart conditions in uninsured patients who are unable to regularly see a doctor prior to pregnancy. We are fortunate in NYS that Medicaid coverage is granted to patients once they become pregnant; however, if a patient is already pregnant when these conditions are discovered, it is far too late. The risk of maternal morbidity and mortality is exponentially greater to a patient with underlying conditions when they are not discovered and optimized prior to conception.

It is my personal and our organization's belief that we have the potential to hugely impact our maternal morbidity and mortality rates in New York State through **passage of the New York Health Act (NYHA)**. The NYHA would guarantee universal healthcare coverage **from birth for all New Yorkers**. It would eliminate the need for OBGYN providers to play catch-up in diagnosing, treating, and optimizing pre-existing conditions that are exponentially riskier when combined with pregnancy. It would allow us to focus our prenatal visits on the *pregnancy itself*, and not solely on the patient's underlying disorders.

The NYHA is **essential** to achieving reproductive justice in our state. By passing this legislation and ensuring access to healthcare to all New Yorkers, our patients would be able to lead healthier lives before, during, and after pregnancy for themselves and their children. As an OBGYN and a representative of PNHP-NY Metro, I strongly voice my support for consideration of the New York Health Act as a necessity in the solution to improving maternal morbidity and mortality in New York State. Please consider the NYHA as a key legislative component of the strategic plan developed to tackle this issue moving forward.

Sincerely,

Ashley Duhon, MD  
Buffalo, NY