



We improve the lives and experiences of Maryland's children and youth by advancing policies and programs that tackle disparities and close equity gaps to ensure that there is an opportunity for all our most vulnerable to thrive.

**Testimony before the Finance Committee
In SUPPORT of**

Senate Bill 356- Health - Maternal Mortality Review Program - Reporting Requirement

**Melissa Rock, 0-3 Strategic Initiative Director, Advocates for Children and Youth
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The racial disparities in maternal mortality present a public health crisis in Maryland. **Black women giving birth in Maryland are almost 4 times (3.7x) more likely to die** due to pregnancy related issue than their white counterparts.¹ To make the crisis worse, these disparities are widening. As noted in the 2018 report from Maryland's Maternal Mortality Review Program (MMRP):

“In the U.S., Black women have an MMR 2.4 times greater than White women, a disparity that has persisted since the 1940s. In Maryland, there is also a large disparity between the rates among Black and White women. Figure 2 shows the MMR by race in Maryland for six overlapping 5-year periods over the past decade. Compared to 2007- 2011, **the 2012-2016 White MMR in Maryland decreased 34.6 percent and the Black MMR increased 20.5 percent**, increasing the racial difference. The 2012-2016 Black MMR is 3.7 times the White MMR. Given this racial disparity, it appears that the recent decrease in the Maryland MMR is a result of the decrease in the White MMR”² (Emphasis added).

Maryland's MMRP reviews all maternal deaths that occur within one year of that woman giving birth. In 2016, statewide there were 39 “pregnancy-associated deaths,” nine of which were pregnancy-related.³

It is not only women of color giving birth who are at risk; their babies are too. The racial disparities that exist in maternal mortality can also be found in low birth weight⁴ (which often leads to infant mortality) and infant mortality.⁵ There is nothing biological in black women or their babies that makes them more susceptible to these negative birth outcomes.⁶ Socio-economics are not the

¹ See the graph on p. 2 of this testimony with racial disparities in Maryland's Maternal Mortality Rate since 2007 from Maryland Department of Health, “Maryland Maternal Mortality Review 2018 Annual Report,” Health –General Article § 13-207 at p. 6. <https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/documents/Health-General-Article-%C2%A713-1207-2018-Annual-Report-Maryland-Maternal-Mortality-Review.pdf>

² Id.

³ Id.

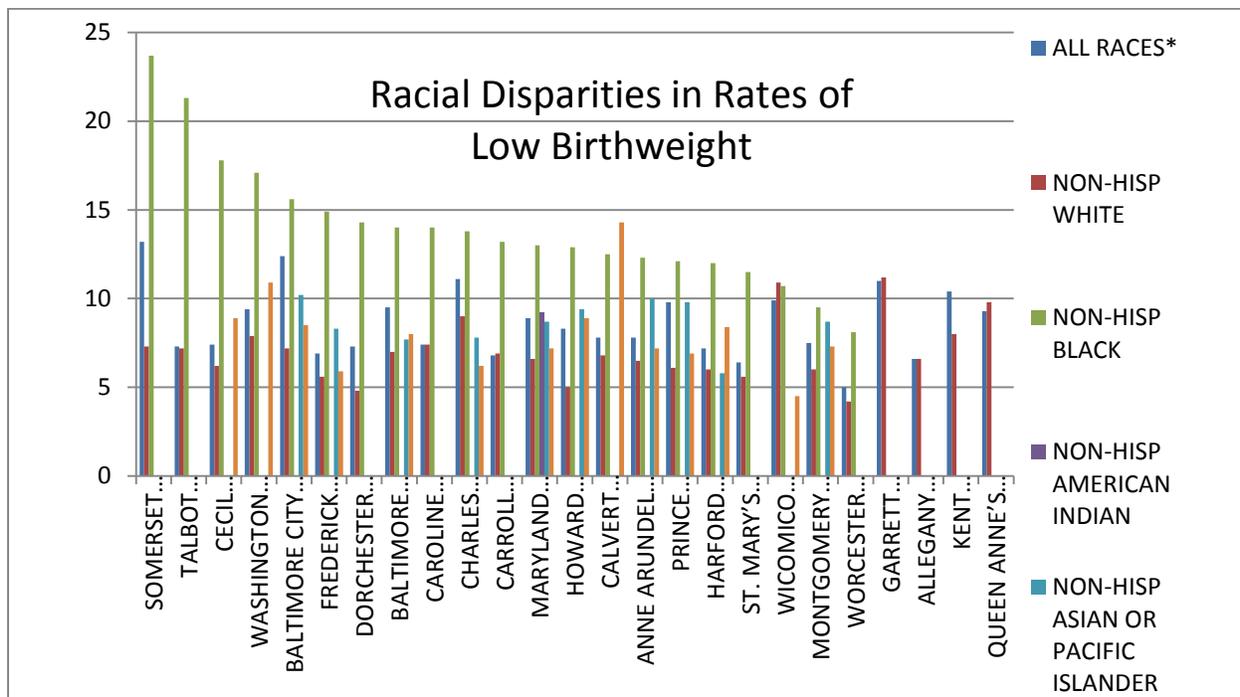
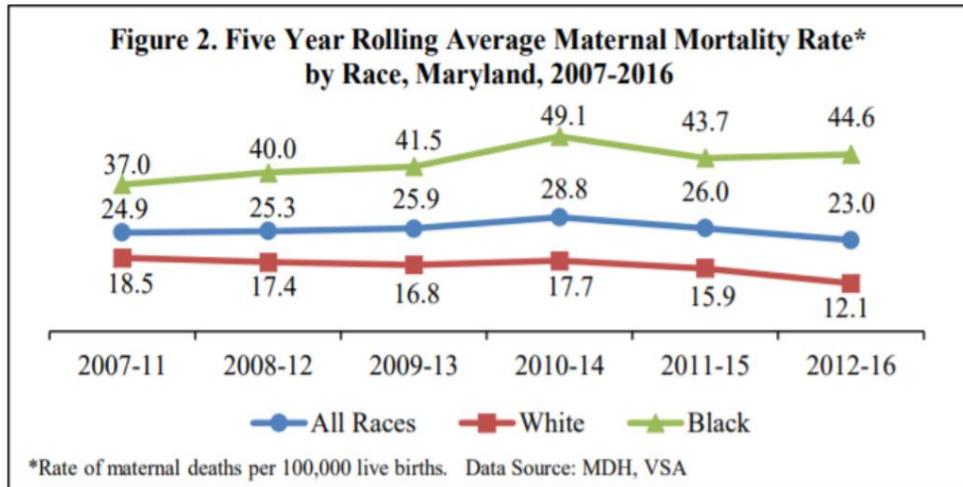
⁴ See graph of Racial Disparities in Rates of Low Birthweight by County on p.2 of this testimony (from Maryland Vital Statistics' 2017 Annual Report).

⁵ See graphs of Racial Disparities in Rates of Infant Mortality by County and statewide on p. 3 of this testimony (from Maryland Vital Statistics' 2017 Annual Report).

⁶ <https://www.thenation.com/article/whats-killing-americas-black-infants/>

answer either because the wealthiest and most highly educated black women have poorer birth outcomes than the poorest least well educated white women.⁷ Rather, the racism that black women experience over the course of their lives impacts their health as well as the health of their babies.⁸ There is also widespread bias among medical professionals that impacts the quality of health care that black women receive in America.

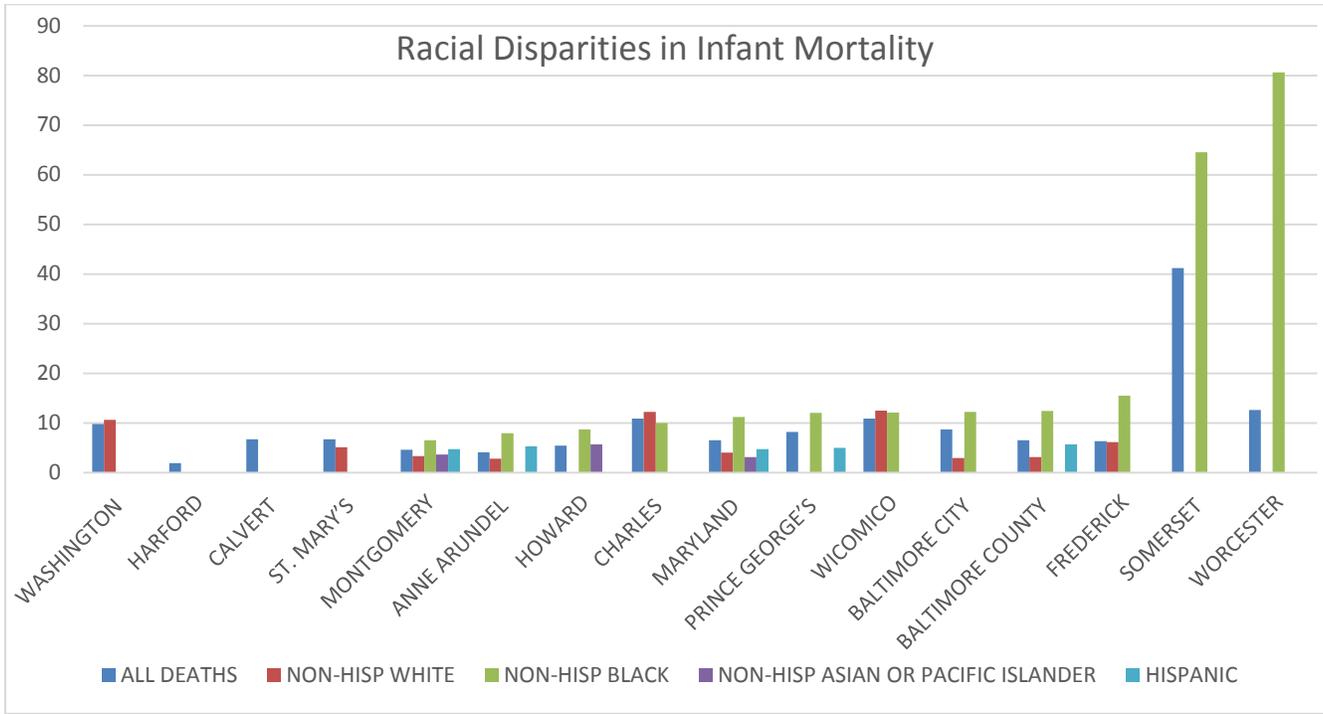
SB 356 simply requires the State MMRP to include a section addressing racial disparities. The genesis of this legislation is that the 2017 report from the Statewide MMRP on MDH's website deleted any mention of racial disparities.⁹ **We urge this committee to issue a favorable report on SB 356 to ensure that the State MMRP's report always addresses racial disparities in maternal mortality so we can begin to eliminate these racial disparities.**



⁷ Id.

⁸ Id.

⁹ <https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/documents/Health-General-Article-%C2%A713-1207-Maryland-Maternal-Mortality-Review-2017-Annual-Report.pdf>



INFANT MORTALITY

Infant Mortality Rate by Race and Hispanic Origin, Maryland, 2008-2017.

