

A PROPOSED RESOLUTION

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

To declare the existence of an emergency with respect to the need to amend the Establishment of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner Act of 2000 to require the Chief Medical Examiner to investigate all maternal mortalities occurring in the District of Columbia.

RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the “Investigating Maternal Mortalities Emergency Declaration Resolution of 2019”.

Sec. 2. (a) On March 6, 2018, the Council passed the Maternal Mortality Review Committee Establishment Act of 2018, effective June 5, 2018 (D.C. Law 22-111; D.C. Official Code § 7-671.01 *et seq.*), which created a Maternal Mortality Review Committee (“MMRC”) within the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (“OCME”).

(b) The purpose of the MMRC is to study and understand the circumstances surrounding maternal mortalities and provide recommendations to improve the unacceptably high maternal mortality rate in the District.

(c) Maternal mortality rates in the District indicate nothing short of a maternal health crisis, with 36.1 maternal deaths occurring per 100,000 births in 2018. For many District women of color and low-income women, access to comprehensive preventive and prenatal care is inconsistent and insufficient, a situation made even more dire by the recent closing of area labor and delivery units.

34 (d) The MMRC is staffed with a host of experts ready to conduct case reviews and study
35 existing patterns to better understand maternal mortality in the District. However, because OCME
36 does not currently have jurisdiction to investigate and make determinations of death in all maternal
37 mortalities, the information which the MMRC has before it in its case reviews is incomplete.

38 (e) The Executive has taken many critical steps toward improving the health of pregnant
39 District residents, including by introducing the permanent version of this emergency legislation
40 last month and hosting a comprehensive Maternal and Infant Health Summit. The Committee on
41 the Judiciary and Public Safety will hold a hearing on the permanent bill, but it is necessary to act
42 now on an emergency basis to fill the gap in authority.

43 (f) This emergency legislation would amend Section 2906 of the Establishment of the
44 Office of the Chief Medical Examiner Act of 2000, effective October 19, 2000 (D.C. Law 13-172;
45 D.C. Official Code § 5-1405), to authorize OCME to investigate all maternal mortalities, thereby
46 allowing the MMRC to fulfill its statutory charge and make recommendations to address the
47 District's maternal mortality crisis.

48 Sec. 3. The Council of the District of Columbia determines that the circumstances
49 enumerated in section 2 constitute emergency circumstances making it necessary that the
50 Investigating Maternal Mortalities Emergency Amendment Act of 2019 be adopted after a single
51 reading.

52 Sec. 4. This resolution shall take effect immediately.