Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Schumer:

As you begin work on the next phase of developing a recovery package, we urge you to include policies to end our nation’s maternal mortality crisis and eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in maternal health outcomes. Fifteen months into a global pandemic that has disproportionately harmed communities of color, the risks facing Black women and other birthing people of color are at a crisis point. Any recovery package that will successfully and meaningfully address the pandemic’s impact on people of color must directly address the effects of coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) on pregnant people and new moms. Specifically, we urge you to include the full $3 billion called for in President Biden’s plan to address our maternal health crisis, as well as a permanent expansion of yearlong postpartum Medicaid coverage for every mother in every state.

As you know, the United States has the highest maternal mortality rate of any high-income country and the only rate that is rising. The pregnancy-related mortality rate for Black women in the U.S. is three to four times higher than the rate for white women, and other women and birthing people of color also face elevated rates of mortality and morbidity.

The risks for pregnant people have only grown during COVID-19: according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “pregnant and recently pregnant women are at an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19 compared to nonpregnant women.” CDC also found that pregnant people with COVID-19 are at an increased risk for adverse pregnancy outcomes. In addition to clinical risks, the pandemic has affected social determinants of health

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4 Ibid.
that contribute to maternal health disparities, like increased food insecurity, which disproportionately impacts Black and Hispanic families.\(^5\) Without bold and immediate action to address the heightened clinical and non-clinical threats to pregnant people and their growing families, our national recovery from COVID-19 will only exacerbate the inequities that existed before the pandemic and worsened over the past year.

Recognizing the urgent need to address these alarming trends, President Biden’s American Families Plan includes a much-needed $3 billion investment in maternal health.\(^6\) The President’s proposal provides an opportunity to make considerable investments in federal funding to address this crisis, including policies included in the *Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act of 2021* (H.R. 959/S. 346) and a permanent expansion of yearlong postpartum Medicaid coverage. By advancing these two priorities in the upcoming recovery package, we can comprehensively address every driver of our nation’s maternal health crisis.

Taking bold action to address maternal mortality in the next legislative package builds on important progress we made under your leadership through the *American Rescue Plan Act of 2021*, which included a provision to create a pathway for states to extend postpartum Medicaid coverage from the current standard of 60 days to one full year after the end of a pregnancy. This historic step will allow new mothers to access the care they need and deserve for the full postpartum period. However, the state plan option to extend postpartum coverage in the American Rescue Plan Act expires in five years. We cannot afford to take coverage away from new moms at a time when they need it most: we must include legislation like the *MOMMA’s Act* (H.R. 3407/S. 411) and the *MOMMIES Act* (H.R. 3063/S. 1542) to make yearlong postpartum Medicaid coverage a permanent reality for every mom in every state in the next recovery package.

It is also essential that the upcoming legislative package includes provisions that target the multifaceted causes of our nation’s maternal mortality crisis, such as those in the Momnibus, a suite of 12 essential bills that include bipartisan policies to save moms’ lives, end racial and ethnic disparities, and achieve true equity and justice for all mothers and birthing people.

The Momnibus includes investments that will be needed during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, including investments in community-based organizations, policies to grow and diversify the perinatal workforce, expanded access to maternal mental health care treatments and support, measures to address the impacts of climate change on maternal and infant health outcomes, and provisions to protect pregnant people during this pandemic and future public health emergencies. These provisions build on other critical policies, like the investments in evidence-based national obstetric emergency protocol, CDC technical guidance on best practices in maternal mortality and morbidity prevention, and standardized maternal health data collection in the MOMMA’s Act.

Permanently expanding postpartum Medicaid coverage and advancing policies in the Momnibus are necessary investments that will save lives, promote health equity, and advance the

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fundamental principle that in America, every family has a right to thrive—a principle that begins with a safe and healthy pregnancy and birth. We look forward to working with you to advance this urgent priority.

Sincerely,

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator
Lauren Underwood
Member of Congress
Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress

Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator
Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress
Lucy McBath
Member of Congress
Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress
Al Lawson
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Ritchie Torres
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Carolyn B. Maloney
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Earl Blumenauer
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Gwen Moore
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Ayanna Pressley
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Mike Quigley
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Rashida Tlaib
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André Carson
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Marc Veasey
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Angie Craig
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Nydia M. Velázquez
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Barbara Lee
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