American Academy of Nursing Supports Congressional Efforts to Address Maternal Mortality

Academy Recommendations Call for Equitable Access to Care

Washington, D.C. (July 11, 2019) – Today, American Academy of Nursing (Academy) President-Elect Eileen Sullivan-Marx, PhD, RN, FAAN, spoke at the House of Representatives Black Maternal Health Caucus's Stakeholder Summit on black maternal care along with other national policy and advocacy organizations. The Academy pledges its continued commitment to addressing the causes, consequences, and solutions to combat two prominent issues related to maternal and infant health (MIH): increased rates of maternal mortality and morbidity as well as preterm births (PTBs) within the United States and especially among African-American mothers.

The Black Maternal Health Caucus, co-chaired by Representatives Alma Adams (D-NC) and Lauren Underwood (D-IL), was launched this spring to improve black maternal health outcomes. Even as advancements are made in MIH, the US lags behind other developed countries on these important maternal and infant health issues. Maternal mortality rates have doubled since the 1990s and, despite a steady decline from 2007 – 2014, PTBs peaked at 9.93% in 2017.[i,ii,iii] Racial disparities within MIH are significant as African American women are 3.2 times more likely to die during pregnancy or childbirth than Caucasian women and research shows that impoverished, marginalized, and under-represented women are most vulnerable to PTBs.[iv]

Recent efforts to improve MIH and to address the health and racial disparities in this area remain insufficient. African-American mothers remain the primary group at risk of both maternal and infant mortality as well as PTBs. These statistics will only improve significantly when better access to quality health care is achieved. The Academy stands with the Black Maternal Health Caucus in its mission to raise awareness within Congress and establish effective, evidence-based, culturally-sensitive health policies to improve health outcomes for African-American mothers.

"The Academy was honored to be present and share recommendations at today's Black Maternal Health Stakeholder Summit. Recently, the Academy published policy briefs expressing support for policies that will lower the rates of preterm births as well as maternal and infant mortality and morbidity," said Academy President Karen Cox, PhD, RN, FACHE, FAAN. "As a nation, we owe mothers access to equitable care. The Academy is committed to working towards this necessary and achievable goal."

The Academy offers several broad-based recommendations to effectively improve MIH overall, which were shared at today's summit. Most critically, the Academy calls for heightened data collection and research on maternal mortality and PTBs to better healthcare professionals' understanding of significant contributing factors.

Read Dr. Cox's *President's Message,* "Global maternal mortality rate declines—Except in America," along with the policy briefs "Reducing Preterm Births in the United States" and "African-American Mothers' Persistent Excessive Maternal Death Rates" at www.nursingoutlook.org.

###

The American Academy of Nursing (www.AANnet.org) serves the public and the nursing profession by advancing health policy, practice, and science through organizational excellence and effective nursing leadership. The Academy's more than 2,600 fellows are nursing's most accomplished leaders in education, management, practice, research, and policy. They have been recognized for their extraordinary contributions to nursing and healthcare.

CONTACT:
Ellie Cook | 202-777-1175 | ecook@aannet.org

---

[i] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2015). *Pregnancy Mortality Surveillance System.* Retrieved from: https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/MaternalInfantHealth/PMSS.html.

[ii] Martin, J.A. and Osterman, M.J.K. (June 2018). *Describing the increase in preterm births in the United States, 2014*. National Center for Health Statistics Brief. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db312.pdf.

[iii] Martin, J.A., Hamilton, B.E., Osterman, M.J.K., Driscoll, A. K., and Drake, P. (November 2018). *National Vital Statistics Report.* The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of National Statistics. Retrieved from: https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr67/nvsr67_08-508.pdf.

This reflects the inclusion of more recent data released after the original publication of the policy brief.

[iv] Ibid.