



Black Maternal Health Caucus Stakeholder Summit

July 11, 2019

Remarks from President-Elect Eileen Sullivan-Marx, PhD, RN, FAAN

Thank you, Representative Adams, Representative Underwood, and the entire Black Maternal Health Caucus for inviting me to speak on behalf of the American Academy of Nursing at this Stakeholder Summit on the importance of improving black maternal health and reducing mortality and morbidity. The Academy's more than 2,600 fellows are nursing's most accomplished leaders in education, management, practice, research, and policy who have been recognized for their extraordinary contributions to nursing and healthcare.

The Academy stands in support of the Black Maternal Health Caucus and we are ready to work with you and with Congress to examine the causes and consequences of maternal mortality and morbidity and how such causes and consequences are exacerbated by inequitable access to care. Foundationally, the Academy is committed to advancing health equity and championing wellness. As one of our three policy priorities this Congress, the Academy believes to truly improve health, policies must closely consider the social determinants of health and expand access to quality care.

The Academy's Expert Panels enable our fellows to apply their expertise to advance evidence-based innovations in health care delivery. The Academy's Maternal and Infant Health Expert Panel recently published a policy brief on African-American mothers' persistent excessive maternal death rates, in which the Academy calls for:

- The collection of more comprehensive and consistent data on African-American mothers across all states, as well as additional funding to make this possible;
- Equitable healthcare insurance coverage and access to care for all women and mothers, especially during the childbearing period;
- The requirement of coterminous mortality and morbidity review boards in all states, with county-level data on pregnancy mortality available to the public; and
- The appointment of a special task force by the CDC to launch a sustained media campaign on the prenatal, pregnancy, and postpartum care of mothers.

I would like to additionally highlight two of the Academy's Edge Runner models. Academy Edge Runners are innovative, nurse-designed models of care that demonstrate improved health quality while reducing cost. Both of the following programs have proven effective because they are partnering and engaging with the community in practical ways to ensure mothers and families have voice and agency in their health.

First, the *11th Street Family Health Services*, of Drexel University, is a nurse-managed, transdisciplinary health center delivering care, promoting health, and reducing health disparities among underserved populations in Philadelphia. Notably, the 11th Street center reduced pre-term births to 2.5% in African-American patients, compared to 15.6% in Philadelphia broadly.

Second, the *Family Health and Birth Center* in the Developing Families Center, located here in Washington, DC, provides a midwifery and nurse practitioner model for cost-effective maternal and child care for low-income women. After six years, the center demonstrated a substantial lowering of African American preterm births, low birth weight, and cesarean section rates. Preterm birth and low birth weight rates for patients at the center are now over 10% lower than in the general African-American population of DC and C-section rates are over 20% lower.

Both of these innovative models have shown that when black mothers are accessing appropriate care services, their pregnancy outcomes are more positive than they would have been otherwise.

I am honored to be included in this important discussion and offer the Academy and its fellows as resources in addressing these important health issues. Thank you for your efforts to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity, especially among African American mothers, and for your work to eliminate health disparities while promoting equitable care.