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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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More than 40 Organizations PUSH for Maternal Health Legislation in Virginia

The alarm bells have been sounding in Virginia where [83% of pregnancy-related deaths](#) are preventable, according to a report by the Virginia Department of Health.

And racial disparities are staggering. Black women in Virginia continue to have two times higher rates of pregnancy-associated deaths compared with their white counterparts. [In 2021](#), the rate was 113.8 for Black women and 54.8 for white women (per 100,000 live births).

In Virginia, there is a saying, “As goes Virginia, so goes the nation,” but when it comes to maternal health, Virginia is not leading - it [ranks 40 out of 50 states](#) for maternal mortality.

The Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy founded the PUSH Coalition in 2019. The Coalition is one of the largest groups of faith and advocacy organizations in Virginia solely focused on improving maternal health equity. More than 40 faith and advocacy organizations together with democratic and republican legislators have come together in a bi-partisan effort to pass essential legislation to save lives and address these inequities:

The PUSH Coalition is focused on four bills/budget amendments to improve maternal health:

- Bill: [SB740](#) – Senator Locke (D, 23rd) is bill patron. Senator Head (R, 3rd) is supportive. [HB1649](#) - Delegate Hayes (D, 91st) is bill patron and Delegate Coyner is supportive (R, 75th): Unconscious Bias and Cultural Competency Training for Health Care Professionals
- Bill: [SB831](#): Senator Locke Presumptive Eligibility for Pregnant Women (immediate enrollment into Medicaid)
- Budget amendment (Senator Locke and Delegate Coyner): Direct DMAS (VA Dept. of Medical Assistance Services) to apply for a Medicaid reentry waiver to provide pregnant and postpartum care for women who are incarcerated.
- Budget amendment Item 277: Support Governor Youngkin’s budget amendment for perinatal health hubs

“As a mother, an advocate, and a proud Virginian, I am deeply disturbed that many pregnant women in the Commonwealth fear for their own survival and for the safety of their babies. Some have told me that they worry that they may not make it out of pregnancy alive,” said Kathryn Haines, Health Equity Manager for the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy.

The Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy’s former Health Equity Manager, Dora Muhammad, launched the PUSH maternal health campaign in 2019 to help achieve the goal of eliminating racial disparities in maternal mortality. Over the past four years, the campaign has grown into a coalition of more than 40 organizations committed to advocating equity in maternal health.

[LINK to PUSH Coalition member list](#)

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The Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy advocates economic, racial, and social justice in Virginia’s policies and practices through education, prayer, and action. VICPP is a non-partisan coalition of more than 750 faith communities working for a more just society.