

Wilmington, Delaware  
May 16, 2019

**#4656**

**WHEREAS**, despite the United States spending more than any other country on health

**Sponsor:**

care, maternal mortality rates continue to climb throughout the country, including in Delaware;

**Council  
President  
Shabazz**

and

**WHEREAS**, the State of Delaware is currently ranked number 11 in the nation for

maternal mortality and morbidity with 14 deaths per 100,000 births in the State; and

**Co-Sponsors:**

**WHEREAS**, Black women are at high risk for pregnancy-related mortality. According

**Council  
Members  
McCoy  
Gray  
Dixon**

to a study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Black women are

three to four times as likely to die due to childbirth and pregnancy-related complications than

white women; and

**WHEREAS**, the population in the City of Wilmington primarily identifies as Black.

The City also has a slightly larger female population, with 53% of the population identifying

as female. Recent research conducted on the demographics of Wilmington found that the

average family size in Wilmington is 3.33 individuals, which indicates that many families have

at least one child; and

**WHEREAS**, there is a growing body of evidence that suggests that the use of doulas

or other non-clinical labor support may improve positive birth outcomes and experiences for

both mothers and infants; and

**WHEREAS**, a doula is a trained professional that provides continuous physical and

emotional support during and shortly after childbirth. Doulas typically serve as advocates for

the mother and can help guide them through the birthing process with both vaginal and

cesarean births. Doulas also provide support to mothers after childbirth with breastfeeding and with the transitional issues that come with adding an additional person to the family; and

**WHEREAS**, research has shown that doulas may improve birth outcomes for women at-risk for adverse birth outcomes due to racial disparities by decreasing mortality risks associated with cesarean births, operative vaginal births, use of analgesics and duration of labor; and

**WHEREAS**, there is also research that suggests that the usage of doulas may save state Medicaid dollars. Medicaid covers a large number of births, and a study published in 2016 found that women who received doula support had lower preterm and caesarean birth rates than Medicaid beneficiaries regionally, leading to an average cost-savings of \$986; and

**WHEREAS**, some states have begun to provide reimbursement through Medicaid or to introduce legislation that would add doula services as a covered benefit for Medicaid. In 2018, New Jersey and New York were two such states that have passed legislation with interest in the usage and support of doulas; and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council respectfully calls on the Delaware General Assembly to develop a taskforce to further investigate the potential maternal health benefits of doulas and Medicaid coverage of doulas for the state of Delaware; and

**WHEREAS**, the taskforce must be racially and professionally diverse, and should include consumers from the City of Wilmington. Additionally, the taskforce should be equipped to examine the issue through a health disparities model; and

**WHEREAS**, considerations of the taskforce should include certification and training requirements of doulas, fair-market reimbursement and how to connect with the community and other partner organizations.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WILMINGTON,** that the City Council recognizes that the increase in maternal mortality rates throughout the United States, despite spending the most on health care, is indicative of a massive problem in our health care system that puts Black women particularly at risk. By conducting further research on maternal mortality rates in Delaware and the potential for doulas to increase positive birth outcomes, we can lower these risks associated with pregnancy and childbirth.

Passed by City Council,

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk

**SYNOPSIS:** This Resolution calls on the Delaware General Assembly to create a task force that will examine the potential positive benefits of doulas on maternal mortality rates throughout the state of Delaware.