

Commonwealth of Virginia
Office of Governor Ralph S. Northam

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Governor Northam Announces Budget Proposals
to Combat Maternal and Infant Mortality,
Reduce Racial Disparity**

*~ Governor's proposed budget makes investments in home visiting,
Doula support, and increased health coverage for new moms ~*

RICHMOND—Governor Ralph Northam today announced his proposed budget will include approximately \$22 million to combat maternal and infant mortality and reduce the racial disparity in Virginia's maternal mortality rate. Proposed funding will dramatically expand Medicaid coverage for new moms, increase home visiting, and explore Medicaid reimbursement for Doula support services.

“It is unacceptable that black women in Virginia continue to die from pregnancy-related causes at more than twice the rate of white women,” **said Governor Northam**. “As a Commonwealth, we can and must do better. These historic investments will make a real difference for families across Virginia, and will ensure all moms and children have access to the high-quality, culturally-competent care they deserve.”

In June, Governor Northam [announced](#) a goal to eliminate the racial disparity in Virginia's maternal mortality rate by 2025. As part of this directive, Secretary of Health and Human Resources Daniel Carey convened a diverse group of stakeholders and embarked on a 10-stop [listening tour](#) across all regions of the Commonwealth. Today's budget proposals reflect months of input from mothers, medical professionals, doctors, and community advocates consulted as a result of this process.

“As a mother who has experienced the tragedy of losing a newborn child, I'm proud and grateful for the Governor's leadership on this issue,” **said Dr. Aaliyah Samuel**, a mom who shared her testimony during the listening tour. “Ten years ago, I made a career change because I believe that policy is what changes people's lives. Today, Governor Northam made it clear he not only listened to my voice and the voices of other mothers, advocates, and community members across the Commonwealth—he heard us loud and clear. Make no mistake, this funding won't just change lives, it will save lives.”

Data from the Virginia Maternal Mortality Review Team show the majority of pregnancy-associated deaths occur more than 43 days after pregnancy. However, the current FAMIS MOMs program only provides Medicaid coverage for women during pregnancy and 60-days postpartum. The Governor’s budget includes nearly \$4 million over the biennium to extend this coverage up to one year post-pregnancy and include medically necessary treatment for addiction and substance use disorder.

“This significant investment is a critical step towards eliminating the racial disparity in Virginia’s maternal mortality rate,” **said Senator Louise Lucas**. “I look forward to working with the Governor as he continues to champion these measures during the upcoming General Assembly session.”

The Governor’s proposed budget also includes \$4 million in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding to increase access to affordable, reliable contraception through the Long-Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC) program. Increasing access to LARCs allows families to better plan and space pregnancies and has been shown to decrease rates of preterm and low birthweight births.

“It is great to see serious steps being taken to address the crisis of maternal and infant mortality,” **said Delegate Lashrecse Aird**. “These proposed investments will increase access to high-quality, patient-centered care for women and families across the Commonwealth.”

Additionally, the Governor’s budget makes significant investments in community-driven and wrap-around treatment models. The budget includes \$12.8 million to make home visiting services—shown to be incredibly effective at helping new mothers navigate the complex health care system—eligible for Medicaid reimbursement. The budget also includes language to study the development of a Medicaid reimbursement model for community-based doula services, which have proven effective at reducing maternal mortality, particularly among women of color.

“These crucial measures will help address the racial disparities in maternal and infant health outcomes in Virginia,” **said Delegate Marcia Price**. “I look forward to witnessing bipartisan support in helping to save lives.”

Watch the video of today’s announcement [here](#). Governor Northam will address the Joint Money Committees on December 17 to share the full details of his budget plan.