



THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20201

January 10, 2022

Edward P. Ehlinger, MD, MSPH
Acting Chair
Advisory Committee on Infant and Maternal Mortality
5600 Fishers Lane
Room 18N84
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Dr. Ehlinger:

Thank you for your letter on behalf of the Advisory Committee on Infant and Maternal Mortality (the Committee) regarding the recommendations on how to protect and improve the health of mothers and infants. Based on the introduction letter you sent me in May 2021 regarding the Committee's work and from these latest recommendations sent in August 2021, it is evident that the Department, the Biden-Harris Administration, and the Committee share the same goals and priorities—a commitment to improve maternal and infant health and achieve health equity in particular.

The Department has reviewed the recommendations carefully. I am pleased to briefly share a few examples of how some of the Committee's recommendations are already being implemented or will be soon:

- With the American Rescue Plan, President Biden gave states tools to address racial disparities in pregnancy-related deaths by providing states the option to extend Medicaid coverage to ensure that mothers can access the care they need up to 12 months after birth.
- In September 2021, I announced that the Health Resources and Services Administration made awards totaling \$350 million to every state across the nation to support safe pregnancies and healthy babies. This funding expands home visiting services to families most in need, increases access to doulas and doula training, addresses health disparities in infant deaths, and improves data reporting on maternal mortality—all recommendations of the Committee.
- Efforts are also underway to improve the quality of care that pregnant and postpartum people receive through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Perinatal Quality Collaboratives and to ensure that women deliver at the right facility at the right time through the CDC Levels of Care Assessment Tool.
- The President's discretionary budget request for Fiscal Year 2022 includes more than \$200 million to help end race-based disparities and decrease the overall high rates of adverse maternal health outcomes. If appropriated, the funding increase will help bolster Maternal Mortality Review Committees nationwide; expand the Rural Maternity and Obstetrics Management Strategies program; ensure implicit bias training for health care providers; and create state pregnancy medical home programs.

- The Department has also been working to implement the President's Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government.

I again want to thank you and the Committee for your thoughtful and dedicated work on these recommendations. Your advice and expertise will continue to inform our national efforts and activities across the Department to improve health outcomes and reduce infant and maternal mortality.

Sincerely,

/s/ Xavier Becerra