October 7, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Democratic Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader Schumer,

The undersigned represent more than 50 reproductive justice organizations and Black policy leaders committed to advancing Black maternal health through critical policy change. We applaud the investments in the House of Representatives’ Build Back Better Act text, which help address the deep inequities Black women and birthing people experience. We urge you to continue your commitment to health and racial equity by including the resources in the Build Back Better Act that has advanced in the House in full in the final package.

As groups and individuals, we are committed to reproductive justice and birth justice. Reproductive justice is a Black feminist framework, defined as the human right to maintain personal bodily autonomy, have children, not have children, and parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities. Birth justice is realized when women and trans people are empowered during pregnancy, labor, childbirth, and postpartum to make healthy decisions for themselves and their infants. In accordance with these frameworks, we are writing to express our shared support for the following priorities:

- **Coverage for Black Women and Birthing People**: Black women and birthing people deserve access to high-quality health insurance coverage that ensures continuity of care, regardless of the type of insurance they hold. At least one third of maternal deaths happen after the end of pregnancy and nearly one quarter of pregnancy-related deaths happen more than six weeks postpartum. In the postpartum period, new parents can face a range of medical challenges, such as pregnancy-related complications, chronic conditions, or postpartum depression—all while caring for a newborn. Despite these risks, current pregnancy-related Medicaid requires states to provide coverage for only 60 days after the end of pregnancy. The extension of Medicaid postpartum coverage from 60 days to 12 months will increase access to health care, particularly for Black, Brown, and Indigenous people who are disproportionately uninsured or underinsured, and who experience inequitable outcomes.

1 The phrase ‘birthing people’ is used to be inclusive of all people who give birth, regardless of gender identity.
Centering Racial Equity in Maternal Health Investments: The Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act is a blueprint to direct resources that can address the ongoing maternal health crisis that disproportionately harms Black women and birthing people. The Momnibus was developed based on the experiences and expertise of Black maternal health providers, patients, birthworkers, and advocates. It comprehensively addresses the driver of our nation’s unconscionable inequities in maternal health: racism. We commend the inclusion of the Momnibus investments that provide necessary funding to address social determinants of health, support community-based organizations working to promote maternal health equity, and grow the Black perinatal workforce, among other critical supports to improve Black maternal health. We urge Congress to maintain these provisions in the final Build Back Better package so President Biden can sign these maternal health priorities into law.

The inclusion of critical maternal health resources in the House Build Back Better package is a meaningful effort to address the ongoing maternal health crisis, driven by historical and structural racism in health care. The inclusion of both mandatory, permanent yearlong Medicaid coverage postpartum and the Momnibus investments are critically necessary for Black women, birthing people, and their families to not only survive, but also thrive. Together, we urge the Senate to prioritize Black women and birthing people’s lives across the country by keeping these fundamental provisions in the final reconciliation package.

Sincerely,
Black Maternal Health Federal Policy Collective
ACCESS Reproductive Justice
Ancient Song Doula Services
Atlanta Doula Collective, Inc.
Baobab Birth Collective
Birthing Cultural Rigor, LLC
Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI)
Black Feminist Future
Black Girl’s Guide to Surviving Menopause
Black Mamas Matter Alliance
Black Women Birthing Justice
Black Women for Wellness
Black Women’s Health Imperative
Blkfeminist Consulting
Caitlin R. Williams, MSPH
Chocolate Milk Café National Inc
CinnaMoms

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Dana Davis
Diversity Uplifts, Inc.
Dorothy E. Roberts, George A. Weiss University Professor of Law & Sociology
Feminist Women's Health Center
Health Equity Resources & Strategies (H.E.R.S), LLC
In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda
Interfaith Voices for Reproductive Justice (IVRJ)
Majaica, LLC
Mamatoto Village, Inc.
Medical Students for Choice
Mississippi Black Women's Roundtable
National Birth Equity Collaborative
National Black Midwives Alliance
National Network of Abortion Funds
New Voices for Reproductive Justice
Nicole Clark Consulting, LLC
Onyema Obieka / Policy Analyst Black Women for Wellness Action Project
Original BlackPrint
Rev. Deneen Robinson
Shades Of Blue Project
SisterLove, Inc.
SisterReach
Southern Birth Justice Network
State Senator Tiara Mack (RI)
The Afiya Center
The Bloom Collective
The Moore-O'Neal Law Group, LLC
The New Mexico Birth Equity Collaborative
Theodore R Mitchell