

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Signs Legislation Requiring Maternal Health Care Professionals to Undergo Explicit and Implicit Bias Training

05/11/2021

TRENTON – Governor Phil Murphy today signed S703/A1079, requiring all health care professionals who provide perinatal treatment and care to pregnant persons at a hospital or birthing center undergo explicit and implicit bias training.

“The health of our Black mothers and babies is critical to the health of our state – period,” said Governor Murphy. “This value is reflected in my Fiscal Year 2021 budget through the full funding of explicit and implicit bias training for all staff at our labor and delivery hospitals and Federally Qualified Health Centers.

“For the past three years, Nurture NJ has been laser focused on transforming a system that has historically failed Black women and babies,” said First Lady Tammy Murphy. “The Nurture NJ Maternal and Infant Health Statewide Strategic Plan is our blueprint to address the core factor at the heart of our Black maternal and infant health crisis – implicit bias and systemic racism.

The bill was sponsored by Senators Ruiz and Cunningham and Assemblywomen Speight, Pintor Marin, and Reynolds-Jackson.

“It is unacceptable that New Jersey has the fourth highest maternal mortality rate in the country, with Black women being nearly four times more likely than white women to lose their life during or after childbirth,” said Senator Ruiz. “By unpacking the implicit biases healthcare workers may hold, we can begin to improve outcomes across racial demographics and provide more equitable care to our mothers around the state.

“Far too often we hear stories of Black women’s complaints about pain or discomfort being ignored or brushed aside, only to result in serious complications or death,” said Senator Cunningham. “Doctors may not be intentionally treating Black women differently, but the maternal mortality data makes it clear that there are systemic issues resulting in vast disparities in outcomes.

“Government officials and healthcare professionals alike have been making a concerted effort to improve maternal health outcomes in our state,” said Assemblywoman Speight. “But this endeavor ultimately cannot succeed unless every mother receives the same standards of treatment.

“As we examine maternal and infant mortality disparities in New Jersey, my colleagues and I have heard some genuinely heart-rending stories that shine a spotlight directly on the role implicit bias plays in impacting the quality of care,” said Assemblywoman Pintor Marin. “The key to solving this problem lies in understanding that implicit bias means the provider doesn’t even realize they are treating certain patients differently based on unconscious thought processes.

“Every patient deserves to be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their race, ethnicity or background,” said Assemblywoman Reynolds-Jackson. “Equality of care can mean the difference between life and death for black women in particular, who are nearly seven times more likely to die from pregnancy than white women.

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Office of Governor PO Box 001
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