

PRESS RELEASE



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ACOG's Key Women's Health Priorities Incorporated in Governor's Council on Women and Girls Report

January 11, 2018--ACOG commends Governor Cuomo and his Council on Women and Girls for incorporating key ACOG priorities in the "[Report on the Status of New York Women and Girls 2018 Outlook](#)." The report invests in New York women through advancement of key ACOG priorities, including proposals to establish a maternal mortality review board, ensure reproductive health access, and expand maternal depression resources in the state.

"ACOG applauds Governor Cuomo and the Council on Women and Girls for using this tremendous platform and moment in history to help raise awareness about critical issues impacting women's health in this state," said Iffath Abbasi Hoskins, MD, FACOG, Chair of ACOG District II's Advisory Council. "Many of the initiatives incorporated in the report have long been legislative priorities for ACOG NY and we look forward to partnering with the Governor and the legislature to ensure the recommended proposals are enacted into law."

ACOG supports numerous proposals included in the report, below are three key priorities.

Maternal Mortality Review Board

Despite being home to some of the most clinically advanced, state of the art medical facilities globally, New York currently ranks 30 out of 50 states in its maternal death rate. The racial and ethnic disparities are also pervasive, with African American women being nearly four times more likely to die during pregnancy and childbirth compared to white women.

ACOG is pleased to partner with the New York State Department of Health to guide the implementation of the maternal mortality review board, comprised of a multidisciplinary group of experts to facilitate a comprehensive, confidential review of maternal deaths in the state, identify the causes and factors contributing to these deaths, and importantly, highlight opportunities for prevention.

Since 2013, [ACOG's Safe Motherhood Initiative](#) (SMI) has worked with 117 hospitals across New York State to reduce maternal mortality through the development and implementation of evidence-based clinical bundles on the three leading causes of maternal death.

"The SMI has made tremendous progress in standardizing clinical protocols across the state, and I have personally seen how the execution of our bundles has saved lives," said Mary D'Alton, MD, FACOG, Co-Chair of the SMI. "While improvements have been made, our work is far from done. A maternal mortality review board is a critical part of the statewide effort to identify which deaths could have been prevented, understand why stark racial disparities exist, and to create new ways to ensure that no woman in this state dies from a preventable cause during or after child birth."

"The SMI is committed to continuing its work to educate providers, improve clinical practice, and change culture within the hospital setting," said Cynthia Chazotte, MD, FACOG, Co-Chair of the SMI. "Through a partnership between ACOG and the state and city's health departments, the review boards will give us perspective and shine new light on an existing and pervasive public health problem that affects communities, big and small, across the state."

Reproductive Health Access

Access to contraception and safe, legal and timely access to abortion is an integral part of women's health care. ACOG supports a women's right to decide whether and when to have children. To assist women in making these choices they need full access to health care including contraception and abortion care.

"As an ob-gyn and abortion provider in New York State, I thank the Governor for his leadership in calling on the legislature to pass the Comprehensive Contraceptive Coverage Act and to advance legislation that would decriminalize abortion in state law and codify *Roe v. Wade*, irrespective of any potential federal action," said Kathleen Morrell, MD, FACOG, Chair of ACOG District II's Legislative Committee. "At a time when women's health care is under attack at the federal level, as ob-gyns we must amplify our voices on behalf of our patients to fight to protect women's access to fundamental reproductive health care."

The CCCA would ensure contraception insurance coverage, including coverage for emergency contraception in state law and allow for 12 month dispensing of contraception at one time.

The report also outlines a proposal to provide greater protections to providers performing abortions by removing it from the criminal code and placing it in health care law where it belongs. The proposal would also ensure protections for abortion care when a woman's health is at risk, or when a fetus is not viable and clarify the ability of advanced practice clinicians to provide abortion care in line with their expertise and training.

Multi-Agency Effort to Combat Maternal Depression

This proposal to facilitate more robust access to maternal depression treatment resources will ensure women suffering from maternal depression will receive the help and care they need.

Perinatal depression is a pervasive health issue and one of the most common complications during pregnancy and the postpartum period, affecting 1 in 7 women. While New York State has made great strides in combatting maternal depression by enhancing screening services and strengthening insurance

coverage protections, providers still face significant barriers in connecting women to treatment resources. It is estimated that only 15% of those affected actually receive treatment. Timely identification of at-risk women, coupled with accessible and quality treatment options and resources is paramount to improving maternal outcomes.

“There is significant variability in the availability of resources to treat and refer patients with perinatal depression,” said Leah Kaufman, MD, FACOG, Secretary of ACOG District II’s Advisory Council. “Through efforts to expand Project TEACH to connect ob-gyns and other primary care providers with mental health specialists, we can increase patients’ access to essential treatment services and greatly improve health outcomes.”

ACOG looks forward to partnering with the administration and state agencies to expand Project TEACH to enhance provider capacity to treat perinatal depression and to launch an awareness campaign to educate and reduce stigma of maternal depression in this state.

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