



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004

ZACHARY PARKER
COUNCILMEMBER, WARD 5

COMMITTEE MEMBER
Facilities and Family Services
Health
Hospital and Health Equity
Housing
Transportation and the Environment

September 16, 2024

Nyasha Smith, Secretary
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Secretary Smith,

Today, I am introducing the Housing is Maternal Health Amendment Act of 2024. Please find enclosed a signed copy of the legislation, which is co-introduced by Councilmembers Bonds, Henderson, and Pinto.

Stable housing is essential for expecting mothers.¹ Housing insecurity contributes to elevated stress levels, which can negatively impact pregnancy outcomes, including increasing the levels of cortisol, a stress hormone that can affect fetal development. Earlier this year, my Legislative Director, Kendra Wiley, visited non-profit Mamatoto Village in Ward 7 to learn more about the ways they serve Black women in maternal health. When she asked about improving maternal health outcomes, leaders at Mamatoto Village again emphasized the centrality of stable housing for expectant mothers.

For purposes of providing services for people who are unhoused, the definition of “family” under the Homeless Services Reform Act is defined as “a person with a minor or dependent child, or a pregnant woman in her third trimester.” The enclosed legislation proposes an important amendment to the current definition of “family” under the law, extending access to short-term family housing to expecting mothers beginning in their second trimester instead of the third.² This change allows expecting mothers in their second trimester to receive similar priority shown to other families, such as interim eligibility placement when shelter is unavailable, automatic

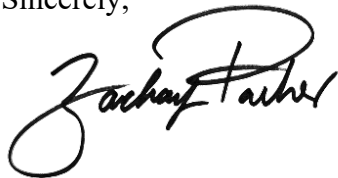
¹ Bhatnagar, P., Abdus-Salaam, R., Canzater, S., Efetevia, V., Freeborn, R., Girard, V., Nedhari, A., F. Perry, D.F., Snowden, E., & Watson, K. (2024). Housing Justice Is Reproductive Justice: A Review of Housing Justice as a Structural Determinant of Black Women and Birthing People’s Reproductive Health in Washington, DC: Mamatoto Village.

² The Department of Human Services provides an overview of homeless services available to families, individuals, and youth here: <https://dhs.dc.gov/page/homeless-and-homelessness-prevention-services>.

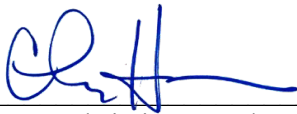
eligibility determination if the Mayor does not issue one within 12 days of an eligibility placement, and mandatory placement in shelter when determined to be eligible.

Making this change represents a targeted but crucial step towards improving maternal health outcomes in Washington, D.C. The District's maternal mortality rate is alarmingly high, nearly double the national average, with women of color bearing the brunt of these adverse outcomes. As a member of the D.C. Council's Committee on Health. I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Council and in the executive to advance better maternal health outcomes in the District. Please contact my Deputy Chief of Staff, Conor Shaw, at cshaw@dccouncil.gov if you have any questions about this legislation.

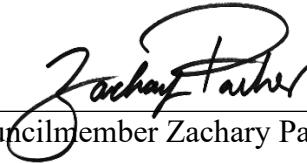
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Zachary Parker". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "Z".

Zachary Parker
Ward 5 Councilmember

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4 Chairman Christina Henderson



Councilmember Zachary Parker

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8 Councilmember Anita Bonds



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10 Councilmember Brooke Pinto

11
12 A BILL

13
14 IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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19 To amend the Homeless Services Reform Act of 2005 to change the definition of “family” to
20 include a pregnant woman in her second trimester.

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22 BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this act may
23 be cited as the “Housing is Maternal Health Amendment Act of 2024”.

24 Sec. 2. Section 2(16)(B) of The Homeless Services Reform Amendment Act of 2005, effective
25 October 22, 2005 (D.C. Law 16-35; D.C. Official Code § 4-751.01(16)(B)), is amended by
26 striking the phrase “third trimester.” and inserting the phrase “second or third trimester.”

27 Sec. 3. Fiscal impact statement.

28 The Council adopts the fiscal impact statement in the committee report as the fiscal
29 impact statement required by section 4a of the General Legislative Procedures Act of 1975,
30 approved October 16, 2006 (120 Stat. 2038; D.C. Official Code § 1-301.47a).

31 Sec. 4. Effective date.

32 This act shall take effect after approval by the Mayor (or in the event of veto by the
33 Mayor, action by the Council to override the veto), a 30-day period of congressional review as

34 provided in section 602(c)(1) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December
35 24, 1973 (87 Stat. 813; D.C. Official Code § 1-206.02(c)(1)), and publication in the District of
36 Columbia Register.