

Memorandum in Support

**New York Dignity in Pregnancy and Childbirth Act
A4018-A (Assemblymember Forrester)/S6983-A (Senator Brisport)**

American Nurses Association-New York (ANA-NY) is a professional nursing organization representing the interests of New York State's 270,000 registered nurses. ANA-NY advances the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing care, supporting the professional and educational advancement of nurses, and promoting the welfare of nurses to the end that all people may have better health care.

This legislation would establish the New York Dignity in Pregnancy and Childbirth Act, which would require hospitals and other healthcare facilities providing perinatal care to implement an evidence-based implicit bias program for all health care providers involved in such perinatal care. Additionally, this legislation would require the Department of Health to track and publish data on maternal morbidity and pregnancy-related deaths.

Registered nurses are the single most important influence in the delivery and management of care for patients. Across the entire patient experience, and wherever there is someone in need of care, registered and advanced practice nurses work tirelessly to identify and meet the needs of the individual, their families, and the communities where they live. Ensuring optimal health for individuals and communities means that registered and advanced practice nurses must play a pivotal role in ensuring health equity.

As nurses working across New York State to ensure the best possible outcomes for our patients, we believe providers should engage patients in shared decision-making practices that respect pregnant people's bodily autonomy. Implicit-bias training helps us achieve this goal. This bill is a reproductive justice and health measure that will break down a key barrier to prenatal care access and helps address New York's maternal mortality crisis, in which Black women are dying at a rate over four times higher than white women. In its most recent report, the New York State Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Advisory Council highlighted the urgent need to reduce racial disparities in maternal health outcomes, including by recognizing and addressing the impacts of systemic discrimination and supporting maternal mental health.

No New Yorker should have to fear seeking health care during pregnancy. Yet, studies repeatedly show that many pregnant people avoid healthcare settings, even when they desire care, out of fear of criminalization and family separation. As New York faces a maternal mortality crisis that is exponentially worse for Black women, the State must make every effort to reduce barriers to potentially life-saving prenatal care. This must include requiring implicit bias training for all health care providers working with perinatal patients.

For these reasons, ANA-NY strongly supports A4018-A/S6983-A and urges its swift passage.