



ILLINOIS MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH COALITION

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Improving Infant Mortality in the State of Illinois: The Emma Report

Lawmakers Asked to Prioritize Infant Health in Illinois

Chicago. On **September 16th** The Campaign to Save Our Babies, a project of the Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition, will be releasing their recommendations to lawmakers to prevent the more than 1,300 infant deaths which occur every year in Illinois. **The Press Conference for the Emma Report and the Fall Meeting of the Campaign to Save Our Babies will be held at Saint Sabina Church, 1210 West 78th Place in Chicago, at 10AM.** Elected officials will attend, including State Senator Donne Trotter, State Representative Deborah Graham, State Representative Elizabeth “Lisa” Hernandez and Alderman Toni Preckwinkle.

In Illinois, African American babies are 2.4 times more likely to die before their first birthday than Caucasian babies and this disparity increases to more than triple in the city of Chicago. The Campaign to Save Our Babies worked with medical providers, social service agency representatives, elected officials, community residents, government employees, faith leaders and academia to compile the recommendations in **the Emma Report** geared towards improving birth outcomes in Illinois. This report is the product of more than 2 years of study into the causes of infant death in Illinois.

In the past 25 years, Illinois has made steady and impressive progress by reducing the overall infant mortality rate by more than 50%. However, as explained by Dr. Myrtis Sullivan, Associate Director of Family Health for the Illinois Department of Human Services, “Although infant mortality in Illinois has improved, a significant disparity between African-American and Caucasian infants still persists.” She added, “No one entity can solve this problem on its own.”

Robyn Gabel, Executive Director of the Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition, stated about the report, **“The Emma Report and the Campaign to Save Our Babies is so important because the racial divide seen in infant and maternal mortality rates is not just shameful, it is disturbing and it is happening right here in Illinois.”** She added, “We must take a community approach and use all the knowledge we have gained to change the 3 P’s - policy, program and personal choices to improve maternal and infant health.”

The ten recommendations take a community approach to the problem of infant mortality, addressing policy, programmatic and personal choices to improve birth outcomes in the state of Illinois. Suggestions in the Emma Report for young people include **universal access to early**

childhood services, expansion of **school based health centers** and **comprehensive health education** in schools. For mothers the Emma Report calls for a **lowering of C-section rates** in the state, as well as a **provider quality rating system**. Finally, many of the recommendations call for statewide improvements to affect the entire family, including **medical home practices** and a **federal paid leave policy for parents**.

Appropriations Committee Chairman and Senator to the 17th District in Illinois, Donne Trotter, said, “Infant mortality is not only a moral issue, it’s also a fiscal issue. **The high costs of pre-term babies in the state of Illinois ends up resting on taxpayers**. The Emma Report addresses the various causes of infant mortality in an effort to improve not only the lives of our children, but the health of our state budget.”

Members of the steering committee for the Campaign to Save Our Babies, including Access Community Health Networks, the Cook County Bureau of Health Services, University of Illinois School of Public Health, Advocate Health Systems and the Chicago Department of Public Health, are calling for the adoption of the Emma Report’s recommendations in this next legislative session.

More information about the Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition’s Campaign to Save Our Babies and Emma Report may be found at www.ilmaternal.org.

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The **Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition**, was founded in 1988, is dedicated to promoting and improving the well being of infants, children, women, and families through advocacy, education, and community empowerment. Its mission leads the coalition to support school health centers throughout the state; education to reduce infant mortality in Austin, Englewood, West Englewood, and Auburn-Gresham; increase immunization rates for children, adolescents and the elderly; and provide information about Illinois’ health care coverage programs.

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