

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. RES. 1494

Recognizing the threat of air pollution and extreme heat to maternal and infant health, and expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that meaningful interventions must be rapidly and equitably developed and deployed to address the unique vulnerabilities of pregnancy in Latino communities.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 24, 2024

Ms. BARRAGÁN (for herself, Mr. GRIJALVA, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Ms. TLAIB, Mr. CLEAVER, Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ, and Mrs. NAPOLITANO) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce

RESOLUTION

Recognizing the threat of air pollution and extreme heat to maternal and infant health, and expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that meaningful interventions must be rapidly and equitably developed and deployed to address the unique vulnerabilities of pregnancy in Latino communities.

Whereas there is a significant association between air pollution and heat exposure to maternal and fetal health outcomes in the United States;

Whereas pregnancy represents a sensitive window of susceptibility to environmental toxins for women, as the pregnant

body undergoes physiological changes in all major organ systems;

Whereas air pollution can be linked to adverse maternal health outcomes, including hypertensive disorders of pregnancy, polycystic ovarian syndrome, subfertility, miscarriage, and failure of assisted reproductive technology;

Whereas air pollutant exposure can be linked to reduced conception rates and fertility;

Whereas exposure to particle pollution and ozone can lead to adverse birth outcomes such as preterm birth, low birth weight, and stillbirth;

Whereas prenatal exposure to air pollution can lead to asthma and allergy development in children, and increase offspring susceptibility to disease in adulthood;

Whereas immigrant, low-income communities of color are two times as likely to live in the most polluted counties in the United States, compared with White mothers, even after controlling for maternal risk factors, region, and educational status;

Whereas, of all groups, Latina mothers have the highest likelihood of living in areas with the highest levels of air pollution compared to their White counterparts;

Whereas a statewide California study that assigned pollutant exposures using ambient air quality monitors showed that Latina mothers are at higher risk of experiencing stillbirth from ozone exposure throughout their entire pregnancy than other ethnicities;

Whereas climate change is linked to and exacerbates ozone production in the atmosphere;

Whereas pregnant women are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change, as pregnancy naturally elevates the body's temperature, makes it more susceptible to external temperatures, weakens its ability to thermoregulate, and increases risk of overheating;

Whereas extreme heat increases the risk of preterm labor, low birth weight, and pregnancy loss;

Whereas Latina women exposed to extreme heat had double or more the risk of preterm birth or stillbirth than White women;

Whereas Latinos are disproportionately represented in the outdoor workforce, such as agriculture and construction, and therefore at higher risk of extreme heat exposure;

Whereas older housing, a scarcity of green spaces, and lack of access to air conditioning increase the vulnerability of low-income pregnant women to heat;

Whereas there is a large ethnic and racial gap in maternal morbidity and mortality between Latinas and non-Hispanic Whites;

Whereas, even with private insurance, Latinas have a 22-percent higher rate of experiencing pregnancy problems;

Whereas compounding inequalities and systemic racism heighten Latinas' vulnerability during pregnancy due to preexisting conditions such as diabetes and obesity, socioeconomic status, education, lack of proper access to health care, and sexism and racism within health care systems that inhibit proper communication and treatment;

Whereas language barriers and medical and institutional mistrust prevent Latinas from accessing critical information and from communicating needs to medical professionals;

Whereas disproportionate exposure to pollution and climate-induced extreme heat can manifest itself in issues of mental health for pregnant Latinas during the postpartum period;

Whereas Latinas already have a 40-percent greater risk of experiencing postpartum depression than White mothers;

Whereas a University of Southern California study cohort of Latina mothers expressed fear, uncertainty, and frustration about power imbalances that prevented meaningful action to address outdoor air pollution and exposure to smog;

Whereas Latinas become pregnant at a younger age than other racial and ethnic groups; and

Whereas Latinas have the highest rate of pregnancy in the United States: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) recognizes that causes of health-harming
3 and climate-warming sources of pollution must be
4 mitigated, broad policy changes are needed, and that
5 there is an immediate need to equip pregnant
6 Latinas and families that are overburdened by air
7 pollution and heat exposure with preventative tools
8 and knowledge during this period of heightened sus-
9 ceptibility for maternal and infant health;

10 (2) recognizes that legislation and funding must
11 include considerations of not only the unique phys-
12 ical and mental vulnerabilities to environmental ex-

1 posures for pregnant women but also the social and
2 economic injustices faced by Latina mothers;

3 (3) supports providing place-based information
4 in English and Spanish regarding vulnerabilities of
5 pregnancy and tangible and affordable action items
6 pregnant women can take to reduce exposure to air
7 pollution and heat;

8 (4) supports the placement of air quality moni-
9 toring systems in Latino communities to track pollu-
10 tion levels and inform residents about health-harm-
11 ing conditions;

12 (5) supports bilingual, easily accessible public
13 alerts for air quality and extreme heat and weather;

14 (6) supports the incorporation of education
15 about the unique vulnerabilities of pregnant women
16 to pollution and heat into professional training for
17 health care professionals, educators, and child care
18 providers;

19 (7) supports the improvement of extreme heat
20 and air pollution guidelines at community centers
21 and health care facilities, especially those facilities
22 that serve women;

23 (8) supports mutual aid networks and commu-
24 nity resilience programs to support pregnant women
25 and families;

1 (9) supports increased affordability of air condi-
2 tioning units and air purifiers for pregnant women
3 and families;

4 (10) supports expanded access to cooling cen-
5 ters and hydration stations in public areas such as
6 bus stops and “clean” rooms in communities near
7 busy roads and polluting facilities;

8 (11) supports the creation of more shaded and
9 green spaces in low-income neighborhoods to provide
10 relief from heat and promote community mental
11 wellness;

12 (12) supports the enforcement of regular work
13 breaks, increasing access to hydration and shade,
14 and providing bilingual education on the dangers of
15 heat exposure in the outdoor workforce, especially
16 for pregnant women;

17 (13) supports increasing access to Latina
18 doulas; and

19 (14) recognizes the importance of community-
20 based research and data collection to better under-
21 stand the risks and needs in Latino communities.

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