

Senate Resolution 924

By: Senators Halpern of the 39th, Orrock of the 36th, Jackson of the 41st, Parent of the 44th, Anderson of the 43rd and others

A RESOLUTION

1 Recognizing Black maternal health statistics; and for other purposes.

2 WHEREAS, the United States has the highest rates of maternal mortality among higher
3 income countries. There are an estimated 700 to 900 deaths per year in the United States that
4 are pregnancy related, and another 50,000 persons suffer from severe complications; and

5 WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 80 percent
6 of pregnancy related deaths in the United States are preventable; and

7 WHEREAS, in Georgia, four in five pregnancy-related deaths are preventable; and

8 WHEREAS, health care improvement initiatives are necessary to ensure that all people who
9 are pregnant or postpartum receive the right care at the right time; and

10 WHEREAS, the United States has an infant mortality rate that is greater than most
11 higher-income countries. Currently, the United States is ranked 33 out of 36 countries
12 belonging to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), with
13 an average of 5.58 deaths per 1,000 live births; and

14 WHEREAS, racism and racial bias in healthcare systems contribute to both the national
15 maternal mortality and morbidity crisis and infant mortality and morbidity, in particular for
16 pregnant and postpartum persons and infants who are Black; and

17 WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare longstanding racial and socioeconomic
18 inequities in our healthcare system; and

19 WHEREAS, one of the essential goals of the state Department of Public Health is to reduce
20 health and mental health disparities among vulnerable and underserved communities to
21 achieve health equity throughout Georgia. This essential goal should extend to health equity
22 for Black birthing people and babies; and

23 WHEREAS, Black women are three to four times more likely to die from pregnancy related
24 causes than non-Hispanic white women, and access to prenatal care, socioeconomic status,
25 and general physical health do not fully explain the disparity seen in maternal mortality and
26 morbidity rates among Black individuals; there is a growing body of evidence that Black
27 persons are often treated unfairly and unequally in the health care system; and

28 WHEREAS, Georgia has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the United States at
29 almost twice the national rate; and

30 WHEREAS, in Georgia, Black women are almost three times more likely to die from
31 pregnancy related causes than non-Hispanic white women; and

32 WHEREAS, Georgia has experienced a string of hospital labor and delivery closures across
33 the state, especially in rural areas. In 2019, 93 of the 109 rural counties in Georgia lacked a
34 hospital labor and delivery unit, and 75 lacked an obstetrician-gynecologist (OB/GYN); and

35 WHEREAS, in Georgia, 34.6 percent of counties are defined as maternity care deserts
36 compared to 32.6 percent in the United States; and

37 WHEREAS, chronic health conditions such as cardiovascular disease, hypertension, obesity,
38 and diabetes contribute to high rates of maternal morbidity and mortality. In Georgia, Black
39 women have egregious above-average rates of all of these conditions, resulting in high-risk
40 pregnancies and poor maternal health outcomes; and

41 WHEREAS, Medicaid coverage for doula care during pregnancy, birth, and postpartum is
42 linked to improved maternal and infant health outcomes, as doula-assisted mothers were four
43 times less likely to have a baby with low birthweight, two times less likely to experience a
44 birth complication for the mother or infant, and significantly more likely to initiate
45 breastfeeding; and

46 WHEREAS, access to quality prenatal, perinatal, and postpartum care is essential to
47 improving maternal health outcomes and reducing preventable maternal death.

48 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE that the members of this body
49 recognize Black maternal health statistics and acknowledge the need for healthcare
50 improvements to achieve health equity.

51 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of the Senate is authorized and directed
52 to make appropriate copies of this resolution available for distribution to the public and the
53 press.