

HB 256 -- MATERNAL CARE

SPONSOR: Bosley

This bill requires the Department of Health and Senior Services to establish a fetal and infant mortality review process in which all local public health agencies may voluntarily participate. A local public health agency that participates in the fetal and infant mortality review process established by the Department would annually investigate, track, and review at least 20% of the jurisdiction's cases of term infants who were born following labor with the outcome of intrapartum stillbirth, early neonatal death, or postneonatal death, focusing on demographic groups that are disproportionately impacted by infant death. A jurisdiction that has less than five deaths in a year must investigate at least one death. The Department must also provide grief counseling to surviving family members.

This bill creates the "Fetal and Infant Mortality Review Fund". The Fund will consist of money appropriated by the General Assembly, as well as gifts, contributions, grants, or bequests.

Currently, the Department has a "Pregnancy-Associated Mortality Review Board" which collects data, consults with experts and analyzes cases regarding child mortality. The Board also examines racial and social disparities in maternal deaths. The Board compiles the data and creates a report that is sent to the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Board also reports the findings to policy makers.

This bill adds additional duties regarding tracking and examining disparities experienced by lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and gender-nonconforming individuals and reporting findings, to the extent possible. This bill also requires the Board to consult with pertinent surviving family members or support people present with direct knowledge of, or involvement in, the event, including the patient in cases of severe maternal morbidity.

The bill also requires the Department to contract with programs that train certified nurse midwives and programs that train professional midwives in accordance with the global standards for midwifery education and the international definition of the term "midwife" as established by the International Confederation of Midwives in order to increase the number of students receiving quality education and training as a certified nurse midwife or as a professional midwife. This bill creates the "Midwifery Education Fund" to be used for these provisions.

This bill is similar to HB 1600 (2024) and HB 1192 (2023).