

# HB26-1044: Black Maternal Health

House Sponsors: Representatives Joseph and English

Senate Sponsors: None

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## Bill Summary:

HB26-1044 strengthens Colorado's response to maternal health inequities by improving provider training, increasing transparency, centering respectful maternity care, and establishing accountability when preventable harm occurs. The bill focuses on addressing racial disparities—particularly for Black birthing parents—through education, data collection, reporting, enforcement, and reinvestment in community-based maternal health solutions.

## Issue:

Colorado continues to see persistent and unacceptable disparities in maternal health outcomes, especially for Black birthing parents, who face higher rates of severe maternal morbidity and maternal death.

Key challenges include:

- Implicit and explicit bias in obstetric care, contributing to delayed treatment, dismissal of symptoms, and preventable harm.
- Lack of consistent provider training on cultural competence and equity in maternal care.
- Insufficient transparency and reporting when discrimination, negligent decision-making, or denial of care contributes to severe maternal morbidity or death.
- Limited accountability mechanisms for health-care practitioners and facilities when inequitable or unsafe care occurs.
- Gaps in data and oversight, making it harder to identify patterns, causes, and solutions to racial disparities in maternal outcomes.

## Solution:

HB26-1044 takes a comprehensive, prevention- and accountability-focused approach to improving maternal health equity by:

- Strengthening provider education
  - Requires physicians, nurses, and nurse aides practicing in obstetrics to complete continuing education on cultural competence and equity in maternal care.
- Centering respectful maternity care
  - Requires birthing facilities to publicly display and provide a statement outlining patient rights, including informed consent, freedom from harm, dignity, privacy, and the right to a birthing companion.
- Improving data and transparency
  - Authorizes statewide surveys of birthing parents.
  - Requires annual (instead of triennial) reporting on maternal health outcomes and racial disparities, including specific data on Black birthing parents.
- Establishing accountability for preventable harm
  - Requires facilities to report severe maternal morbidity or death when discrimination, bias, or negligent care may have contributed.
  - Directs CDPHE to investigate incidents and refer providers to licensing boards when misconduct is identified.
  - Authorizes disciplinary action, fines, and required anti-bias training for health-care practitioners.
  - Allows CDPHE to suspend or revoke facility licenses and impose penalties for preventable, inequitable care.
- Reinvesting in solutions
  - Creates the Maternal Health Equity Improvement Fund to support families, Black maternal health advocates, culturally responsive doulas and midwives, provider training, and prevention efforts.

HB26-1044 saves lives by promoting respectful, evidence-based maternity care, confronting racial inequities head-on, holding systems accountable for preventable harm, and reinvesting resources into communities most impacted by maternal health disparities.



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