



PRESS RELEASE

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**South Dakota Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Issues Report:
*Maternal Mortality and Health Disparities of American Indian Women in South Dakota***

The South Dakota Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights has released a report: “[Maternal Mortality and Health Disparities of American Indian Women in South Dakota](#).” The Committee’s study focused on understanding the factors that may contribute to American Indian maternal mortality, and includes findings related to maternal health. This report is informed by virtual public briefings held on July 14, 2020; September 16, 2020; November 18, 2020; a virtual public community forum on December 16, 2020; and written testimony from American Indian women, researchers, advocates, and other related experts.

Significant concerns raised in the report include a lack of consistent funding for efforts to track and address issues that contribute to disproportionately high American Indian maternal mortality rates, a lack of support for traditional birth practices to support maternal health of American Indian women, and ongoing and pervasive neglect in addressing living conditions and standards of care for American Indians that collectively contribute to disproportionately high maternal mortality rates.

In response to these concerns, the Committee urges policy makers and relevant stakeholders to fund and develop health care programs and resources that (a) are informed by a comprehensive understanding of living conditions and resources for American Indians through ongoing consultation with Tribal members, (b) incorporate traditional birth practices and cultural competency in health care settings and health care provision, and (c) ensure health care standards and resources for American Indians are aligned with national standards.

Committee Co-Vice Chair Paula Wopilawin Antoine said, “Woyaglapi hena wopila eciciyapi. ‘We are grateful for everyone who spoke.’ The Committee is grateful for those who took the time to share their experiences, expertise, knowledge, and testimony on issues which impact individuals and affect our entire state and the Tribal Nations. The compelling testimony, and historical commitments as well as the impact of the global health crisis proves we have collaborative work ahead to ensure the health of the American Indian women, who are the backbone of the nation, citizens of Tribal Nations and of South Dakota.”

Committee Co-Vice Chair Sara Frankenstein said, “The South Dakota Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is honored to submit its report on maternal mortality and health disparities of American Indian women in South Dakota. We sincerely thank the speakers who took the time to share their experiences and expertise with us as we undertook this study, and hope the findings and recommendations found in our report spur meaningful change for South Dakota’s American Indian women.”

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, established by the Civil Rights Act of 1957, is the only independent, bipartisan agency charged with advising the President and Congress on civil rights and reporting annually on federal civil rights enforcement. Our 51 state Advisory Committees offer a broad perspective on civil rights concerns at state and local levels. The Commission: in our 7th decade, a continuing legacy of influence in civil rights. For information about the Commission, please visit www.usccr.gov and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).