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## NEW YORK STATE SENATE DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY

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# Senate Majority Advances Legislation to Protect Maternal Health and Support Reproductive Care

(Albany, NY) Today, the Senate Democratic Majority advanced a package of legislation that will build on the conference’s legacy of protecting reproductive care and improving maternal health outcomes. Today’s legislation includes stronger protections during special enrollment periods to prevent fees from being imposed on pregnant individuals; establishes a uterine fibroid education and awareness campaign through the Department of Health; enhances the scope of health equity impact assessments; includes new initiatives in the Hospital-Home Health Care-Physician Collaboration Program, and creates a community doula directory for doulas serving Medicaid recipients.

These bills look to address the stark disparities in Black and Brown communities with regard to health care access, early disease detection and prevention, and effective treatment options. As the United States continues to grapple with the [worst maternal mortality rates](#) in any developed nation, New York is taking meaningful steps to right these injustices and create a safe haven for women, mothers, and anyone else seeking inclusive care.

**Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins** said, “When it comes to reproductive health, maternal care, and pregnancy outcomes, every person should have access to life-saving information and quality care. The Senate Democratic Majority and I have been, and remain, committed to improving and strengthening resources wherever possible so that pregnant New Yorkers receive top-of-the-line support. I want to thank the bill sponsors for continuing this important work and helping to protect people throughout our state who utilize these services.”

**Chair of the Women’s Issues Committee and bill sponsor, Senator Lea Webb**, said “Access to safe, high quality, and readily accessible reproductive health services and maternal health care is critical to the health and safety of the women who make up more than half of our state’s population and to their families. Here in the US, we have seen increasing rates of maternal mortality with the worst outcomes experienced by Black women and their infants. This trend, coupled with the increase in maternity care deserts across the country, including here in New York, is a public health crisis for women. My legislation makes sure that this issue is given full

consideration during the Certificate of Need process undertaken by the Public Health and Health Planning Council with regard to access to reproductive and maternal health issues that are integral to the health and safety of more than half of our state's population - Women and their families.”

The legislation passed by the Senate Democratic Majority includes:

- **Community Doula Directory:** This bill, [S1867](#), sponsored by Senator Samra Brouk, requires the Department of Health to establish and maintain the New York state community doula directory to promote the use of doula services by Medicaid recipients and reimbursement for doula services in the Medicaid program. It also establishes criteria for admittance into the New York state community doula directory.
- **Special Enrollment Period Protections:** This bill, [S201](#), sponsored by Senator Cordell Cleare, bars a plan or contract from imposing a fee or other penalty for a pregnant individual enrolling during a special enrollment period.
- **Uterine Fibroid Awareness Campaign:** This bill, [S3219](#), sponsored by Senator Cordell Cleare, directs the Department of Health to establish and run a public awareness and education campaign on the symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment of uterine fibroids and the elevated risk for the condition within women of minority populations.
- **Health Equity Assessments:** This bill, [S3609A](#), sponsored by Senator Lea Webb, enhances the scope of health equity impact assessments to require consideration of the impact a project will have on the availability and provision of reproductive health services and maternal health care.
- **Hospital-Home Health Care-Physician Collaboration Program:** This bill, [S1451](#), sponsored by Senator James Sanders, includes new initiatives in the Hospital-Home Health Care-Physician Collaboration Program to address health disparities.

**Bill sponsor Senator Samra Brouk** said, “In a time when New York’s maternal mortality rate continues to trend in the wrong direction, we have an obligation to do everything in our power to save the lives of women and birthing people across the state. Today’s maternal health package is an important step in doing so, and I’m especially proud that my legislation to create a Community Doula Directory was included. There is countless data that outlines how doula care can help save lives in the delivery room—especially for Black women—and establishing this directory will enable those who are most in need of this care to access a provider who best meets their needs. I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues in the Senate to pass legislation that would improve maternal health outcomes in New York State.”

**Bill sponsor Senator Cordell Cleare** said, “I am honored that this essential Maternal Health Legislative Package contains two of my bills designed to ensure that women receive empowering and proactive care. Senate Bill 201 will ensure that no financial impediments to care exist for pregnant individuals who enroll in health insurance while Senate Bill 3219 will require the Department Of Health to conduct an education and outreach program concerning uterine fibroids, which will allow patients to have a greater awareness and understanding of this health condition and how to treat it.”

**Bill sponsor Senator James Sanders** said, “It is vital that we address disparities in our health care system. Everyone deserves effective access to health care. My bill S.1451 promotes

reducing these disparities among racial and ethnic minority groups, persons with disabilities, women, the poor, and persons living in rural and other medically unserved and underserved geographic areas.”

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