

**Written testimony as prepared for delivery in support of HB19-1122 – Colorado
Department Of Public Health And Environment Maternal Mortality Review Committee
[J. Buckner | L. Landgraf / R. Fields | B. Gardner]
by Erin Miller, Vice President, Health Initiatives, Colorado Children’s Campaign**

April 22, 2019

Senate State, Veterans, & Military Affairs Committee

1:30 PM, 6th bill on the calendar

Room 357

- Chair Foote and members of the Committee, my name is Erin Miller and I serve as Vice President of Health Initiatives at the Colorado Children’s Campaign.
- Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 1122 and thank you to Senators Fields and Gardner for bringing this bill forward.
- The United States is failing our pregnant and new moms. American women today are 50 percent more likely to die due to pregnancy-related causes than our mothers were.
- Colorado is not immune from this national trend. The rate of deaths among Colorado’s pregnant and postpartum population nearly doubled between 2008 and 2013.
- And for every woman who dies in childbirth, 70 experience trauma and injuries during birth that take them near death-and stay with them for a lifetime.
- The Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment has had a dedicated committee of volunteer professionals reviewing maternal deaths since 1993.
- But our committee and the Public Health Department lack the protections and funding they need to fully examine these deaths and to regularly provide recommendations to our legislature on how to stop them.
- For example, our volunteer committee lacks subpoena protection. This means that a member of the committee could be subpoenaed to appear in court about the death of a specific woman, simply by serving on the committee.
- Therefore, the committee does not review deaths until they are three years old and most cases have been settled. This creates a significant and dangerous delay in the committee’s reviews.
- Forty-one states and DC have authorized their Maternal Mortality Review Committees in statute. Colorado must step up.

- This bill strengthens our maternal mortality review process.
- It allows for timely review of maternal deaths by providing subpoena protections for Committee members, which is also a requirement for being able to receive new federal funding to support the work of state Maternal Mortality Review Committees.
- It improves diversity on the committee by recommending that members reflect the diversity of Colorado and those most affected by maternal mortality.
- It creates an inclusive process by allowing representatives from rural areas to be properly reimbursed for serving on the committee and by allowing for reimbursement for any other costs incurred in traveling to and participating on the committee, such as dependent and attendant care.
- It ensures that expert committee members will be highly trained in confidentiality procedures and follow all state and federal privacy laws.
- And it funds our public health department to engage impacted stakeholders and complete regular reports to the legislature on ways to prevent maternal mortality and other adverse maternal health outcomes based on findings from the committee.
- Doing a better job of protecting our pregnant population and new moms is an urgent priority. We have a shared responsibility to foster the human potential that lies within our mothers and children, which begins with having a more comprehensive and timely understanding why deaths among Colorado's pregnant and postpartum population are increasing so dramatically.
- Maternal Mortality Review Committees are powerful tools, not only for preventing this most extreme maternal health outcome, but for improving the maternal health care system that keeps all of our pregnant and new moms safe.
- Actions taken in response to review committee recommendations can reduce other negative maternal health outcomes such as near-miss events.
- Strengthening our maternal mortality review Committee will help drive improved and more equitable outcomes for all future Colorado moms.
- I urge your support of this critical and urgent bill.