

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HILDA L. SOLIS

November 26, 2024

Supporting Pregnant People and New Parents who are Experiencing Homelessness

Two neonatal deaths occurred within quick succession on Skid Row in November 2024. On November 8, 2024, paramedics responded to a call to support a mother who delivered a newborn at the corner of East 14th Street and South Alameda Street. The mother and baby were transported to Los Angeles General Medical Center where the baby’s death was officially pronounced by a hospital physician. On November 14, 2024, the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) responded to a call of a baby found deceased in an alley at the corner of San Pedro Street and Sixth Street on Skid Row.

According to a study from the University of San Francisco, Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative, homelessness increases the risk for negative pregnancy outcomes, including maternal morbidity and mortality, pre-term birth and fetal demise, and neonatal morbidity and mortality. Further, although many pregnant people experiencing homelessness have health insurance, many do not have a regular source of healthcare outside the emergency department. Homelessness in pregnancy is also

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associated with adverse perinatal outcomes including increased odds of preterm delivery, and increased risk of neonatal intensive care unit admission and low birth weight independent of preterm delivery.¹

Meanwhile, during the postpartum period there is risk of maternal postpartum depression. In the United States, approximately one in ten birthing individuals experience postpartum depression. For unhoused individuals who may already have mental health needs, these issues can become compounded. Promoting the physical and behavioral health of unhoused pregnant individuals is essential to promote the health of both the birthing individual and infant. This requires a concerted effort to connect unhoused pregnant individuals to physical and behavioral health care, as well as to the needed wraparound services that promote their well-being.

Throughout Los Angeles County, departments are already engaging in efforts to meet the health needs of unhoused individuals. The Department of Health Services' Housing for Health division, as well as the Department of Mental Health's Homeless Outreach and Mobile Engagement Program have field teams delivering services directly to unhoused individuals. The Department of Public Health also has initiatives focused on supporting parents and reducing infant and maternal mortality, such as the Nurse-Family Partnership Program which helps young people take better care of themselves and their babies, and the African American Infant and Maternal Mortality Initiative, which is a countywide coalition to address the disproportionate high rates of Black infant and maternal deaths. In addition to these initiatives, the County must look for ways to

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<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9507167/#:~:text=Homelessness%20in%20pregnancy%20was%20associated,weight%20independent%20of%20preterm%20delivery.>

improve health service delivery to pregnant people experiencing homelessness to better meet the needs of infants and birthing people, from pregnancy through postpartum care.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the County's Department of Health Services, Housing for Health (HFH) division, in collaboration with the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), the Chief Executive Office Homeless Initiative (HI), the Department of Mental Health (DMH), the Department of Public Health, the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), the Office of Immigrant Affairs (OIA), and the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) to:

1. Report back in 90 days in writing with a plan to better support pregnant people and new parents who are experiencing homelessness, with a focus on Skid Row.

This should include, but not be limited to:

- a. A plan for dedicated outreach to pregnant people experiencing homelessness including trainings for outreach workers on health and housing resources available to support this population.
- b. A process for ensuring that pregnant people experiencing homelessness are offered and connected to health and behavioral health care during pregnancy and in the months following birth to address the health of the birthing person and any associated substance use disorders and mental health concerns including post-partum depression.
- c. Strategies for decreasing the number of unsheltered pregnant people.
- d. Trainings for staff at interim housing sites that house people of reproductive age, so that they are equipped to support reproductive health including connecting program participants to care when necessary.

- e. In partnership with health plans, federally qualified health centers, academic institutions, and other providers, a process for coordination of field and street medicine teams to identify pregnant people and provide appropriate services.
- f. Addendums to the Skid Row Action Plan to include supports for pregnant people experiencing homelessness.

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