

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. RES. 256

Recognizing Father's Day and the role of father engagement in improving the overall health and life outcomes for both the mother and baby.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 15, 2023

Mr. WARNOCK (for himself, Mr. SCHMITT, Mr. BENNET, and Mr. BRAUN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to

RESOLUTION

Recognizing Father's Day and the role of father engagement in improving the overall health and life outcomes for both the mother and baby.

Whereas Father's Day is celebrated on the third Sunday of June and will be celebrated in the United States on Sunday, June 18, 2023;

Whereas increased father engagement can play an important role in—

- (1) improving maternal health care;
- (2) addressing maternal mortality and morbidity in the United States;
- (3) bettering the development of the child; and
- (4) the long-term growth of the child;

Whereas research has found that supporting families holistically and actively by including and engaging fathers in

all aspects of maternal health care, from preconception, through pregnancy, and during the first-year postpartum, can positively impact short term and long term health outcomes, improving—

(1) pregnancy and postpartum health, as when fathers are involved and engaged, mothers are—

(A) more likely to receive early and regular prenatal care;

(B) at reduced risk of perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (referred to in this preamble as “PMADs”);

(C) less likely to smoke, drink, or misuse drugs during the pregnancy and perinatal period;

(D) more likely to eat well and take recommended vitamins;

(E) more likely to follow the recommendations of a physician;

(F) less likely to experience complications during pregnancy and labor; and

(G) more likely to have a healthy, safe birth, and more likely to sustain breastfeeding; and

(2) the health and well-being of the baby, including—

(A) improving healthy development;

(B) improving outcomes in school;

(C) reducing rates of teen pregnancies;

(D) reducing risk of substance use; and

(E) improving future executive function;

Whereas methods to empower fathers as advocates for both mother and baby include—

(1) addressing cultural beliefs about fatherhood and the role of men in maternal health and families, especially beliefs that discourage father participation;

(2) peer-to-peer, father-to-father encouragement and support;

(3) involving fathers in prenatal and postpartum care;

(4) providing fathers with information about what to expect before, during, and after birth, and how a father can better understand and support their partner, as well as to help the mother and father bond together as a parenting team; and

(5) educating and engaging fathers in conversations and guidance about mental health, breastfeeding practices, health care appointments, safe sleep, physical touch, and father-child bonding and early childhood development;

Whereas 1 in 5 women experience a PMAD, with suicide being the leading cause of preventable maternal deaths;

Whereas the added support of father engagement reduces the risks of PMADs and contributes to—

(1) a lower chance of preterm birth; and

(2) a healthier birth weight;

Whereas the support of the father during pregnancy can help promote cessation of smoking, drinking, and drug use in the mother;

Whereas father involvement during pregnancy has been linked with a 36 percent reduction in smoking in a mother;

Whereas increasing outreach for fathers to join group prenatal care models and to attend prenatal and postnatal appointments will help prepare both parents and create opportunities for the parents to view pregnancy and parenting as a team effort;

Whereas evidence shows that when fathers are involved during pregnancy appointments and milestones, mothers are 1.5 times more likely to receive prenatal care in the first trimester, which improves health outcomes for both the mother and baby;

Whereas the participation of the father during prenatal care appointments provides the mother with additional support to recognize potential pregnancy-related complications that could lead to maternal morbidity and mortality, such as—

- (1) preeclampsia;
- (2) preterm labor;
- (3) PMADs;
- (4) pregnancy loss or miscarriage;
- (5) stillbirth;
- (6) high blood pressure;
- (7) cervical infections;
- (8) gestational diabetes;
- (9) placental abruption;
- (10) ectopic pregnancy; and
- (11) uterine rupture;

Whereas physical contact between the father and the baby just after birth and in the months following birth has been shown to support and improve the health and development of the baby, improve the mental health of the father, and foster father-child bonding in the short term and long term;

Whereas studies show that engaging fathers in conversations about safe sleep guidelines can help increase safe sleep and reduce infant deaths;

Whereas providing fathers with guidance about infant crying and the risks of shaken baby syndrome can reduce infant deaths;

Whereas the active support of the father during breastfeeding greatly increases the chances of sustained breastfeeding, which improves the physical and mental health of the baby and the mother;

Whereas removing barriers to father engagement can encourage greater involvement during pregnancy, delivery, and parenthood, such as—

- (1) offering moderated father support groups and classes;
- (2) changing messaging about societal perceptions on the role of the father in pregnancy and parenting; and
- (3) health care providers offering prenatal appointments outside of regular work hours, through telehealth and through take-home father-focused resources; and

Whereas support from a warm and emotionally responsive father improves the life and development of their child as the child grows into adolescence, as the child—

- (1) is less emotionally reactive;
- (2) experiences less depression;
- (3) is less prone to mood and anxiety disorders; and
- (4) relates better with other children;

Whereas the sustained involvement of a father with their child to the age of 7 helps negate the risk of psychological maladjustment;

Whereas a trusting relationship between a caring father and son will help the son grow into a strong father themselves;

Whereas a litany of research relates positive outcomes with increased father involvement with their child, including—

- (1) higher academic achievement;
- (2) better school readiness and performance;
- (3) higher self-esteem; and
- (4) greater social awareness;

Whereas the involvement of a loving father in the life of a 16-year-old child predicts less psychological distress for that child when they reach adulthood;

Whereas 1,300 step families are formed every day and 1 out of every 25 families with children have adopted a child, demonstrating a variety of fatherhood experiences; and

Whereas the genuine love of a father is irreplaceable, and the positive externalities that coincide with the love of a father prove both the power of genuine affection and the responsibility fathers have in caring for their children: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) recognizes the important role of fathers in
3 increasing positive maternal health outcomes and re-
4 ducing maternal mortality and morbidity;

5 (2) acknowledges that father engagement ef-
6 forts provide continuous physical and emotional sup-
7 port, which can contribute to healthier pregnancies,
8 safer deliveries, and successful postpartum recov-
9 eries;

10 (3) acknowledges that sustained engagement by
11 a father throughout the life of their child is a privi-

1 leged responsibility that fulfills the father as much
2 as the child; and

3 (4) wishes all fathers and father figures in the
4 United States a happy Father's Day.

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