



October 8, 2026

The Honorable Robin Kelly
2329 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Kelly,

The American Academy of Nursing (Academy) writes in support of the Women Expansion for Learning and Labor Safety (WELLS) Act. This legislation addresses critical disparities in the health care system by implementing a safe discharge labor plan for all post-partum individuals. The Academy has a longstanding commitment to addressing the institutional challenges that mothers of color face across the birth-giving continuum.¹ With more than 3,400 Fellows, the Academy, an honorific society and policy organization, represents nursing's most accomplished leaders in policy, research, administration, practice, and academia. Collectively with our Fellows and partners, the Academy aims to create solutions that matter, inspire innovative change that propels transformation, and envision a healthier future for all people. We deeply appreciate your attention to this critical component to advancing maternal health and reducing mortality.

Research consistently indicates that persistent inequities in the health care system put Black mothers at disproportionate risk for experiencing adverse maternity care outcomes.² Given that Black women in the U.S. are at least three times more likely to die due to a pregnancy-related cause compared to their White counterparts, it is imperative that legislators and health care experts work in unison to implement effective, evidence-based policies to expand maternal care for all populations and manage this public health crisis.³

By urging hospitals and birthing centers to establish safe discharge plans and investing in evidence-based training for health care professionals, the passage of the WELLS Act would bring about significant advancements in maternal health equity for mothers of color, particularly Black mothers. This legislation presents a streamlined, actionable approach through research-backed solutions and workforce development practices championed by the Academy.^{4, 5}

The Academy thanks you for your continued and tireless leadership to address inequities in the health care system and for continuing to advance this important piece of legislation. We look forward to working with you and your dedicated staff to enact it. If we can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact the Academy's Chief Policy Officer, Christine Murphy, at cmurphy@aannet.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Suzanne Miyamoto". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Suzanne" and last name "Miyamoto" clearly legible.

Suzanne Miyamoto, PhD, RN, FAAN
Chief Executive Officer
American Academy of Nursing

¹ American Academy of Nursing. (2024). American Academy of Nursing Statement: Reducing Maternal Mortality and Morbidity and Advancing Maternal Health Equity. <https://aannet.org/page/maternal-health-position-statement-2024>

² Teleki, S. (2021, July 6). Challenging providers to look within themselves: A new tool to reduce bias in Maternity Care: Health Affairs Forefront. *Health Affairs*. <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/forefront.20210630.980773/>

³ Njoku, A., Evans, M., Nimo-Sefah, L., & Bailey, J. (2023). Listen to the Whispers before They Become Screams: Addressing Black Maternal Morbidity and Mortality in the United States. *Healthcare (Basel, Switzerland)*, 11(3), 438. <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare11030438>

⁴ Link, D. G., Bloch, J. R., Fagan, M. B., Low, L. K., Records, K., Simpson, K. R., Tilden, E. L., & Trout, K. K. (2025). Structural, systemic, and political barriers to quality health care during the childbearing continuum: An American Academy of Nursing consensus paper. *Nursing Outlook*, 73(6), 102557. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.outlook.2025.102557>

⁵ Bradford, H. M., Bradley, P. K., Gomes, M., Simpson, K. R., Tilden, E. L., Lyndon, A., Krulwich, C., Alexander, I. M., & Trego, L. L. (2025). Growth and diversification of the perinatal nursing workforce: An American Academy of Nursing consensus paper. *Nursing Outlook*, 73(3), 102393. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.outlook.2025.102393>