

City of Detroit

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TO: Honorable City Council

FROM: David Whitaker, Director 
Legislative Policy Division Staff

DATE: March 22, 2023

RE: **RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH A WOMEN'S COMMISSION**

Council member Angela Whitfield-Calloway requested that the Legislative Policy Division (LPD) draft a RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH A WOMEN'S COMMISSION.

Please contact us if we can be of any further assistance.

BY COUNCIL MEMBER ANGELA WHITFIELD-CALLOWAY

RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH A WOMEN'S COMMISSION

WHEREAS, The mission of the Detroit City Council is to promote the economic, cultural and physical welfare of Detroit's citizens and residents through Charter-mandated legislative functions; and

WHEREAS, In November 2018, the March of Dimes reported, in Detroit, one in six babies are born premature. It was also reported at that time, Detroit was the city with the highest rate of preterm births in the nation; and

WHEREAS, Unfortunately, African American infants are at a 50% greater risk of preterm births and more than twice as likely to die when compared to white infants. In addition, African American mothers are three to four times more likely to die in pregnancy than white mothers. Hispanic mothers and infants are also at a greater risk; and

WHEREAS, The Michigan Maternal Mortality Surveillance (MMMS) Program identifies all maternal deaths that take place in Michigan. MMMS reports that in the State of Michigan about 80 women die each year during pregnancy or within one year after pregnancy. The Michigan Advance reports that Detroit's maternal death rate is three (3) times the national average and pregnant Black women are 4.5 times more likely to die than non-Hispanic white women. And 44% of pregnancy-related deaths were preventable, according to a recent analysis by the Michigan Maternal Mortality Surveillance Committee (MMMS); and

WHEREAS, Many factors contribute to pregnancy related health outcomes. Recommendations for prevention are multi-faceted.

- MIHELP notes that efforts to reduce maternal and infant mortality and improve health outcomes cannot only focus on clinical interventions. They must address the underlying causes of maternal and infant mortality and acknowledge the underlying drivers of inequity, including poverty, racism, and discrimination.
- Women of reproductive age should be educated and supported in adopting healthy lifestyles (maintaining a healthy diet and weight, being physically active, quitting all substance abuse, preventing injuries) and addressing any health problems before becoming pregnant.
- Access to prenatal care. Pregnant women not receiving prenatal care are five (5) times more likely to have a pregnancy-related death, with 34% of African American women not starting care until late in their pregnancy or not receiving the recommended number of prenatal visits; and

WHEREAS, Women in Detroit also face issues of domestic violence, poverty and underemployment, inequitable pay, being homeless with children, illiteracy, a lack of job preparedness skills, depression, the death of a spouse, illicit drug use, a lack of sufficient health care, undiagnosed ailments such as diabetes, HIV and other communicable diseases. Therefore, solving the issues and challenges of such enormity facing women in the city of Detroit, requires dedicated, dynamic and focused leadership; and

WHEREAS, These dreadful statistics and circumstances must be immediately addressed. The solution to these problem requires a unified effort from local government leaders together with public health agencies, health care providers, the local education and business community, community leaders, and other partners to curtail the disastrous sets of circumstances that many women in Detroit face on a daily basis. This joint approach can help address the social, behavioral, and health risk factors that contribute to unfortunate conditions; and

WHEREAS, In 1968, pursuant to State statute, the 15-member Michigan Women's Commission was established by the State of Michigan. The commission's duties include, reviewing the status of women in Michigan, directing attention to critical problems confronting women, in addition to recognizing women's accomplishments and contributions to Michigan; and

WHEREAS, In 2021, Wayne County Commission Chair Alisha Bell, under a recommendation from resident Sarah Roberts, established the Wayne County Women's Commission, to address issues including employment, earning power, health care and childcare and make recommendations designed to better the lives of women living in Wayne County; and

WHEREAS, During this Women's History Month of March 2023, the Detroit City Council is declaring that we must continue to turn the tide in the battle to eradicate the infant mortality epidemic in Detroit, and to address the variety of issues and challenges faced by the women of Detroit;
NOW THEREFORE BE IT

RESOLVED, That the Detroit City Council calls on Mayor Mike Duggan to create a Women's Commission for the City of Detroit, to address the issues of infant mortality, and the variety of issues and challenges faced by women, in order to improve the lives of women living in Detroit; **THEREFORE, BE IT FINALLY**

RESOLVED, Copies of this resolution shall be provided to Mayor Mike Duggan, as well as media and residents.