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**DOH RECEIVES \$1.475 MILLION FEDERAL GRANT
TO HELP REDUCE MATERNAL MORTALITY IN HAWAI'I**

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HONOLULU — The [Maternal and Child Health Branch \(MCHB\)](#) within the Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) Family Health Services Division received a \$1.475 million federal grant to help reduce maternal mortality in Hawai'i.

The funds (\$295,000 a year for the next five years) will be used to maintain and expand the work of the DOH and the Hawai'i Maternal Mortality Review Committee (HMMRC), which identifies, reviews and characterizes pregnancy-related deaths and identifies prevention opportunities.

Findings across MMRCs nationwide indicate that more than 80% of pregnancy-related deaths are preventable. In Hawai'i, approximately 10 to 12 women across the state die each year because of pregnancy or pregnancy-related complications.

“The HMMRC is essential to safeguarding the health and well-being of pregnant individuals, mothers and babies across our islands,” said Sunny Chen, executive director of Hawai'i Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies and HMMRC member. “Hawai'i faces unique challenges — not only geographic isolation but also the cultural and historical impacts of colonialism and persistent health equity issues. By thoroughly examining every maternal death, the team uncovers critical insights that can prevent future tragedies and improve care for all families in Hawai'i.”

The HMMRC was established by the state Legislature in 2016, with the purpose of identifying the root causes of pregnancy-associated deaths and the key points where intervention may have prevented these deaths. A major focus is on the social determinants of health, including disparities in access to care; specific needs of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NPHI) populations; and complications and morbidity in pregnancy that stem from substance use disorder, mental health and adverse childhood events (ACEs).

Focusing efforts within the NPHI communities can significantly improve perinatal care in Hawai'i and reduce maternal mortality. These efforts include supporting perinatal behavioral health to prevent maternal deaths related to perinatal mood, anxiety disorders and substance use disorders; supporting an agency to provide a mobile clinic for perinatal assistance to people who are underinsured and uninsured as they have limited access to prenatal education, care-enabling services, healthcare, and behavioral healthcare; and implementing social media campaigns to support maternal health by increasing awareness of pregnancy-related complications and to empower people who are pregnant and postpartum to speak up and raise concerns.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) funds MMRCs in 46 states and six U.S. territories and freely associated states.

To learn more about MCHB, visit <https://health.hawaii.gov/mchb/>. For more information and referral links to health care providers and community partners, visit the [Maternal Warning Signs & Symptoms webpage](#).

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