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State of North Carolina's Maternal and Infant Health Assessed in New March of Dimes Report Card

North Carolina Earns a "D+" on Preterm Birth, Slightly Improving from Last Year

*March of Dimes Provides Policies and Actions to Support Maternal and Infant Health across the
Continuum of Care*

November 4, 2019 – [Raleigh, NC] – March of Dimes, the nation's leader in the fight for the health of all moms and babies, issued its 2019 March of Dimes Report Card that reveals North Carolina's current state of maternal and infant health. North Carolina earned a "D+" for its preterm birth rate, one key indicator of maternal and infant health. Beyond preterm birth, the Report Card includes a new focus on maternal health and highlights solutions and policy actions that can make a difference. This year's Report Card provides a more comprehensive view of the health of moms and babies—as their health is deeply intertwined—across the country, for major cities, each state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. overall.

The preterm birth rate decreased in North Carolina to 10.4 percent. This compares to a rate of 10.5 percent from the previous year. Overall preterm birth rates in the U.S. increased for the fourth year in a row, earning it a "C" grade, with North Carolina ranking 36th among the 50 states.

The U.S. is among the most dangerous developed nations in which to give birth. Beside the increasing rates of preterm birth, each year, 22,000 babies die in the U.S.—that is two babies an hour. The rates of maternal death and severe pregnancy complications also are unacceptably high. Approximately every 12 hours a woman dies due to complications resulting from pregnancy (more than 60 percent of these deaths are preventable) and thousands of others face life-threatening health challenges.ⁱⁱ

"Every American should be alarmed about the state of maternal and infant health in this country, because it is an issue that touches each one of us. This is one crisis, not two. The health of moms and babies is powerfully linked, and we need to start treating it as such," said Stacey D. Stewart, President and CEO of March of Dimes. "This crisis is about the moms and babies we have lost, and those who face serious health challenges. It's not fine. But with your help, it can be. Join us this Prematurity Awareness Month in the fight for all moms and babies."

The new features of this year's Report Card include more fine-grained distinctions with a plus or minus grade for preterm birth, select social determinants of health to highlight the inequalities that negatively affect moms and babies and the estimated average cost of preterm birth. The Report Card also includes an added focus on maternal health as it relates to prematurity by highlighting solutions and policy actions that can make an impact. In North Carolina, March of Dimes recommends the following:

- Closing the healthcare coverage gap
- Enhanced insurance reimbursement for group prenatal care
- Workplace accommodations for pregnant and nursing women
- Paid parental leave

“The health of moms and babies in North Carolina must be a priority issue for all of us. By working together, as individuals and across the public and private sectors, we can make significant changes that can give every mom the care she deserves and every baby the best possible start,” added Stephen DeMeo, DO, MEd; Division of Neonatology-WakeMed Health & Hospitals and March of Dimes Maternal Child Health Committee Member.

March of Dimes is collaborating with stakeholders across North Carolina to address maternal and infant health. Highlights of these collaborations include:

- In partnership with the Women's Health Branch of the North Carolina Division of Public Health, March of Dimes will implement Implicit Bias trainings for healthcare providers and medical students at 15 sites across the state in the next five years. Implicit Bias training will help drive the changes necessary for improving maternal-child health systems to achieve a culture of equity.
- Participating in the perinatal health subcommittee of State Child Fatality Task Force. This group successfully advocated for additional conditions to be added to the state's New Born Screening panel, and March of Dimes is working alongside a coalition of other health advocacy organizations to introduce recommendations on strategies to advocate for enhancing workplace accommodations for pregnant and nursing moms and paid parental leave.
- Serving on the Perinatal Systems of Care Task Force who is creating recommendations on improving maternal levels of care, enhanced reimbursement for group prenatal care, and reimbursement for doula services
- March of Dimes is a co-lead for COIIN—a Collaborative Improvement and Innovation Network. This group is working on a health equity impact assessment tool for organizations to use to focus on a particular policy/program and its impact on health disparities and health inequities. The tool allows a team to think outside the box and consider all factors that could potentially impact the health of populations at risk.
- The March of Dimes North Carolina Preconception Health Campaign is dedicated to educating women on the importance of preconception health as a strategy to improve future birth outcomes. This includes having a reproductive life plan that includes regular doctor's visits, consuming daily folic acid, and managing weight and chronic conditions.

- Supportive Pregnancy Care—a group-model prenatal care program that aligns with prenatal care guidelines established by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). March of Dimes, will launch the first Supportive Pregnancy Care sites in the state early next year.
- In collaboration with the NBA Wives Association, March of Dimes hosted a community baby shower for more than 80 pregnant moms who receive services from community clinics across Mecklenburg County. The event served as a platform to provide prenatal and infant health information.

Join us in the fight for healthy moms and strong babies by participating in the March of Dimes #ItsNotFine campaign during #PrematurityAwarenessMonth. Visit marchofdimes.org to learn more about the actions you can take, including:

- Advocate by signing our petition to encourage lawmakers to improve the health of moms and their babies by passing a comprehensive bill to fight maternal mortality and morbidity. Visit MarchofDimes.org/ActionCenter to speak up and on social media use #BlanketChange.
- Donate at MarchofDimes.org or create your own #DIYfundraising campaign. Your donation could help in ways such as:
- \$25: Provide a meal to a family with a baby staying in the NICU.
- \$50: Help NICU babies build bonds with their families through programs that give parents the chance to nurture them, even through a hospital stay.
- \$75: Provide quality prenatal care to a mom at risk.

About March of Dimes

March of Dimes leads the fight for the health of all moms and babies. We support research, lead programs and provide education and advocacy so that every baby can have the best possible start. Building on a successful 80-year legacy of impact and innovation, we empower every mom and every family.

Visit marchofdimes.org or nacersano.org for more information. Visit shareyourstory.org for comfort and support. Find us on [Facebook](#) and follow us on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).

ⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Infant Mortality
<https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternalinfanthealth/infantmortality.htm>

ⁱⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Vital Signs: Pregnancy-Related Deaths, United States, 2011–2015, and Strategies for Prevention, 13 States, 2013–2017
https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/68/wr/mm6818e1.htm?s_cid=mm6818e1_w