

Whereas, in the first 6 weeks of fighting in Ukraine, more than 4,300,000 Ukrainians, of which the majority are women and children, fled the country in response to Putin's war;

Whereas women play a critical role in facilitating the transit of children to safety, including by escorting the children of parents and guardians who cannot leave Ukraine so that such children are able to find safety in neighboring countries;

Whereas the women who remain in Ukraine contribute to all aspects of warfighting, including by fighting on the front lines and as part of the territorial defense, delivering supplies and weapons, and preparing cities for assaults by the Russian Federation;

Whereas 17 percent of the armed forces of Ukraine are women;

Whereas the women of Ukraine have a long history of defending Ukraine and standing up for their rights and freedoms;

Whereas, following the 2014 invasion of the sovereign and independent state of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, the women of Ukraine joined the fight to preserve their independence;

Whereas, despite significant contributions to the war effort, outdated legislation in Ukraine classifies women as cooks, tailors, and administrative assistants, even while women were fighting and dying on the front lines beside their male counterparts;

Whereas women are an integral part of the armed forces of Ukraine and continue to defend their homes and their country;

Whereas, on March 9, the armed forces of the Russian Federation deliberately attacked civilian targets in Mariupol, Ukraine, which destroyed a hospital that served as both a maternity ward and a children's hospital, killing two women and a baby;

Whereas, following the devastating attack on the well-known and established hospital, the world watched in horror as pregnant women, mothers carrying newborn babies, and young children fled the rubble of what should have been a safe place;

Whereas the women at the hospital should have been celebrating new life and looking toward raising their children in peace and safety, instead, those women are seeking shelter in subways, giving birth in bunkers, and worrying for the safety of their children and the future of Ukraine;

Whereas the attack on the maternity ward and children's hospital in Mariupol was the third such attack on a maternity ward in Ukraine by the Russian Federation since the beginning of the invasion on February 24;

Whereas, according to the United Nations, more than 4,300 women have given birth since the start of the war, and 80,000 Ukrainian women are expected to give birth in between April and June of 2022;

Whereas all women, in every situation, have the right to a safe birth and access to crucial supplies necessary for the management of pregnancy complications, including oxygen and medical supplies, which are running dangerously low in Ukraine because of the ongoing violence and refusal on the part of the Russian Federation to allow for safe passage for humanitarian purposes;

Whereas the unprovoked attack on a civilian building constitutes a war crime under the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, done at Geneva August 12, 1949, (commonly referred to as the "Fourth Geneva Convention") and should be investigated as such a crime;

Whereas the Russian Federation has deliberately attacked civilian infrastructure in Ukraine, including schools, hospitals, businesses, apartment buildings, and utility services;

Whereas the initial days of the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation have resulted in a disproportionate number of women and children seeking safety outside of Ukraine;

Whereas Ukrainian women and girls, like women and girls in all humanitarian emergencies, including women and girls forced to leave their homes in conflict settings, face increased and exacerbated vulnerabilities to—

- (1) gender-based violence, including rape, child marriage, domestic violence, and sexual exploitation and assault;
- (2) all forms of human trafficking;
- (3) disruptions in education and livelihood;
- (4) lack of access to health care; and
- (5) food insecurity and malnutrition;

Whereas the world has a responsibility to respond with care to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and in neighboring countries to address the specific needs of women and girls;

Whereas the United Nations Security Council adopted United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on October 31, 2000, acknowledging the impact of conflict and security decisions on women and calling on all member states to include "women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict";

Whereas, according to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (commonly referred to as "UN Women"), peace negotiations are more likely to end in a peace agreement when women and women's groups play a meaningful role in the negotiation process, and according to the International Peace Institute, a peace agreement is 35 percent more likely to last at least 15 years if women participate in the development of the peace agreement;

Whereas, in 2016, Ukraine adopted its first National Action Plan for the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, and, on October 28, 2020, Ukraine approved a new National Action Plan for 2021 through 2025 in order to address the impact on women of the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine and to ensure gender equality in the security and defense sectors of Ukraine;

Whereas representation of women in politics in Ukraine has increased steadily since the first parliament of an independent Ukraine met in 1990;

Whereas more than 20 percent of seats in the ninth and current Verkhovna Rada are held by women, the most in Ukrainian history;

Whereas women across Ukraine have made political gains in recent years, including in local elections on October 25, 2020, where 38 percent of deputies elected were women; and

Whereas women in Ukraine should be involved at all levels and in all aspects of leadership, negotiation, conflict resolution, and peacekeeping in order to ensure the most enduring peace for Ukraine and the region: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes, honors, and commends the women of Ukraine who have contributed to the fight for freedom and the defense of Ukraine, including women who—

(A) are members of the Armed Forces Territorial Defense Forces of Ukraine;

(B) are volunteers, organizing and operating humanitarian organizations;

(C) are doctors, nurses, paramedics, and support personnel, providing life-saving services across Ukraine;

(D) have mobilized to assist the safe transfer of the children and other vulnerable individuals from Ukraine; and

(E) are public leaders, politicians, and diplomats;

(2) stands with the people of Ukraine in support of their fight for freedom against the Russian Federation;

(3) acknowledges the women who have risked their lives to travel through territory controlled by the Russian Federation, break siege tactics surrounding cities, and to ensure the safety of children and the elderly;

(4) commends—

(A) the bordering countries of Ukraine, including Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary, and Moldova, who are accommodating more than 4,300,000 refugees; and

(B) the broader European Union for committing to provide support during the growing humanitarian crisis;

(5) calls on all countries to ensure that aid provided in support of refugees of and internally displaced persons within Ukraine takes into account the needs of women and the gender-specific risks that women face in seeking safety;

(6) acknowledges the important role women must play in resolving the conflict between Ukraine and the Russian Federation as outlined in United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2016) and required by the laws of the United States and regulations of Ukraine;

(7) further calls on all countries to promote the meaningful inclusion of women in negotiations and decision-making at all levels, including security decisions; and

(8) commits to supporting the women of Ukraine wherever they are as they fight back against tyranny and work for the free and democratic future of Ukraine.

SENATE RESOLUTION 590—RECOGNIZING THE DESIGNATION OF THE WEEK OF APRIL 11 THROUGH APRIL 17, 2022, AS THE FIFTH ANNUAL "BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH WEEK" TO BRING NATIONAL ATTENTION TO THE MATERNAL HEALTH CRISIS IN THE UNITED STATES AND THE IMPORTANCE OF REDUCING MATERNAL MORTALITY AND MORBIDITY AMONG BLACK WOMEN AND BIRTHING PERSONS

Mr. BOOKER (for himself, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. BROWN, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. PETERS, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Ms. WARREN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. SANDERS, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Ms. BALDWIN, Ms. STABENOW, and Ms. ROSEN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions:

S. RES. 590

Whereas, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Black women in the United States are 3 times more likely than White women to die from pregnancy-related causes;

Whereas Black women in the United States suffer from life-threatening pregnancy complications, known as "maternal morbidities", twice as often as White women;

Whereas maternal mortality rates in the United States are—

(1) among the highest of any member country of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; and

(2) increasing rapidly, from 17.4 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2018, to 23.8 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2020;

Whereas the United States has the highest maternal mortality rate among affluent countries, in part because of the disproportionate mortality rate of Black women;

Whereas Black women are 49 percent more likely than all other women to deliver prematurely;

Whereas the high rates of maternal mortality among Black women span across—

- (1) income levels;
- (2) education levels; and
- (3) socioeconomic status;

Whereas structural racism, gender oppression, and the social determinants of health inequities experienced by Black women and birthing persons in the United States significantly contribute to the disproportionately high rates of maternal mortality and morbidity among Black women and birthing persons;

Whereas racism and discrimination play a consequential role in maternal health care experiences and outcomes of Black birthing persons;

Whereas a fair and wide distribution of resources and birth options, especially with regard to reproductive health care services and maternal health programming, is critical to closing the racial gap in maternal health outcomes;

Whereas Black midwives, doulas, perinatal health workers, and community-based organizations provide holistic maternal care but face structural and legal barriers to licensure, reimbursement, and provision of care;

Whereas COVID-19, which has disproportionately harmed Black Americans, is associated with an increased risk of adverse pregnancy outcomes and maternal and neonatal complications;

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted issues within the broken health care system in the United States and the harm of that system to Black women and birthing persons;

Whereas new data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has indicated that since the COVID-19 pandemic began, the maternal mortality rate for Black women has increased by 26 percent;

Whereas, even as there is growing concern about improving access to mental health services, Black women are least likely to have access to mental health screenings, treatment, and support before, during, and after pregnancy;

Whereas Black pregnant and postpartum workers are disproportionately denied reasonable accommodations in the workplace, leading to adverse pregnancy outcomes;

Whereas Black pregnant people disproportionately experience surveillance and punishment, including shackling incarcerated people in labor, drug testing mothers and infants without informed consent, separating mothers from their newborns, and criminalizing pregnancy outcomes;

Whereas justice-informed, culturally congruent models of care are beneficial to Black women; and

Whereas an investment must be made in—

- (1) maternity care for Black women and birthing persons, including support of care led by the communities most affected by the maternal health crisis in the United States;
- (2) continuous health insurance coverage to support Black women and birthing persons for the full postpartum period up to at least 1 year after giving birth; and
- (3) policies that support and promote affordable, comprehensive, and holistic maternal health care that is free from gender and racial discrimination, regardless of incarceration: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate recognizes that—

- (1) Black women are experiencing high, disproportionate rates of maternal mortality and morbidity in the United States;

(2) the alarmingly high rates of maternal mortality among Black women are unacceptable;

(3) in order to better mitigate the effects of systemic and structural racism, Congress must work toward ensuring that the Black community has—

- (A) safe and affordable housing;
- (B) transportation equity;
- (C) nutritious food;
- (D) clean air and water;
- (E) environments free from toxins;
- (F) fair treatment within the criminal justice system;
- (G) safety and freedom from violence;
- (H) a living wage;
- (I) equal economic opportunity;
- (J) a sustained workforce pipeline for diverse perinatal professionals; and
- (K) comprehensive, high-quality, and affordable health care with access to the full spectrum of reproductive care;
- (4) in order to improve maternal health outcomes, Congress must fully support and encourage policies grounded in the human rights, reproductive justice, and birth justice frameworks that address Black maternal health inequity;
- (5) Black women and birthing persons must be active participants in the policy decisions that impact their lives;
- (6) in order to ensure access to safe and respectful maternal health care for Black birthing persons, Congress must pass the Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act of 2021 (S. 346; H.R. 959); and
- (7) “Black Maternal Health Week” is an opportunity to—

- (A) deepen the national conversation about Black maternal health in the United States;
- (B) amplify community-driven policy, research, and care solutions;
- (C) center the voices of Black mothers, women, families, and stakeholders;
- (D) provide a national platform for Black-led entities and efforts on maternal health, birth, and reproductive justice; and
- (E) enhance community organizing on Black maternal health.

SENATE RESOLUTION 591—EX-PRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE DESIGNATION OF APRIL 10, 2022 AS “VENTURE SMITH FREEDOM DAY”

Mr. BLUMENTHAL submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 591

Whereas, in about 1729, Venture Smith was born free in West Africa and, in 1739, was seized from his home and enslaved in New England;

Whereas 257 years ago, in the year 1765, Venture Smith, at the age of 36, purchased his freedom;

Whereas Venture Smith went on to free his family from the bondage of slavery;

Whereas Venture Smith became a successful landowner, businessman, and author in the United States, generations before Black Americans began to obtain constitutional, legal, social, and economic rights;

Whereas, in November 1798, Venture Smith was the first African American to write and publish his own autobiography;

Whereas Venture Smith was the first person to write and publish the phrase, “My freedom is a privilege which nothing else can equal”;

Whereas Venture Smith died a free man on September 19, 1805 in Connecticut; and

Whereas April 10 would be an appropriate date to designate as “Venture Smith Freedom Day”: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate supports the designation of “Venture Smith Freedom Day” on April 10, which would recognize the 257th anniversary of Venture Smith purchasing his freedom and going on to become a landowner, businessman, and author in Connecticut.

SENATE RESOLUTION 592—DESIGNATING APRIL 6, 2022, AS “NATIONAL ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY AWARENESS DAY”

Mr. CASEY (for himself and Mr. CRAMER) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 592

Whereas assistive technology is any item, piece of equipment, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of an individual with a disability or an older adult;

Whereas an assistive technology service is any service that directly assists an individual with a disability or an older adult in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device;

Whereas, in 2018, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that 1 in 4 individuals in the United States, or almost 61,000,000 individuals, has a disability;

Whereas, in the 2019–2020 school year, the Department of Education reported that there were more than 7,300,000 children with disabilities;

Whereas the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that, among adults 65 years of age and older, 2 in 5 have a disability;

Whereas assistive technology enables individuals with disabilities and older adults to be included in their communities and in inclusive classrooms and workplaces;

Whereas assistive technology devices and services are necessities, not luxury items, for millions of individuals with disabilities and older adults, without which they would be unable to live in their communities, access education, or obtain, retain, and advance gainful, competitive, and integrated employment;

Whereas the availability of assistive technology in the workplace promotes economic self-sufficiency, enhances work participation, and is critical to the employment of individuals with disabilities and older adults; and

Whereas State assistive technology programs support a continuum of services that include—

- (1) the exchange, repair, recycling, and other reutilization of assistive technology devices;
- (2) device loan programs that provide short-term loans of assistive technology devices to individuals, employers, public agencies, and others;
- (3) the demonstration of devices to inform decision making; and
- (4) State financing to help individuals purchase or obtain assistive technology through a variety of initiatives, such as financial loan programs, leasing programs, and other financing alternatives, that give individuals affordable, flexible options to purchase or obtain assistive technology: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

- (1) designates April 6, 2022, as “National Assistive Technology Awareness Day”; and
- (2) commends—

(A) assistive technology specialists and program coordinators for their hard work