



News Release

GEORGE LATIMER, Westchester County Executive

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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WESTCHESTER COUNTY HOLDS SECOND BIRTH EQUITY TOWN HALL

(White Plains, NY) – In an effort to push the needle forward to improve birth equity throughout the County, the second Birth Equity Improvement Project Town Hall was held at the Westchester County Center in White Plains.

The program included updates from White Plains Hospital, New York-Presbyterian Westchester and New York-Presbyterian Hudson Valley on their individual initiatives, reports on current maternal mortality and birth statistics/outcomes from the New York State Department of Health, and information on perinatal wellness resources throughout the County. In addition, there were testimonials from community partners and advocacy agencies, as well as a Q&A session to engage the public.

Westchester County Executive George Latimer said: “This is 2024. We have made so much progress in healthcare from transplants to robotics to cancer prevention and treatment. How is it possible that we are leaving women of color going through pregnancy and childbirth behind? We cannot and will not. We must address these disparities to ensure safer, more equitable care for all women in Westchester County.”

Westchester County Legislator and Chair of the BOL Sub Committee on Health Jewel Williams Johnson said: “We are looking forward to our second Town Hall on this issue on Thursday. These Town Halls are a call to action for measures that go beyond discussions to address implicit bias. Just because providers don’t or rarely see the clinical pathology they prescribe, doesn’t mean someone’s not being hurt or harmed. Pregnant patients of color experience obstetric racism and often, there has been a misalignment between hospital intentions of providing safe and high quality care and patients’ actual experiences. Our Birth Equity Town Halls further needed improvements and progress within our County.

Westchester County Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Sherlita Amler said: “As the County Health Commissioner, I am dedicated to ensuring the health and well-being of every single resident in Westchester County. The issue of birth equity has been more recently day-lighted as an issue that we must and can address. No mother or baby should suffer from inadequate care because of racial bias and lack of economic resources.

The Center for Women's Health Equity at Westchester Medical Center (WMC) that was dedicated in 2023 is one of the many progressive steps we are taking as a County to address this imbalance.”

Westchester County Office for Women (OFW) Director Robi Schlaff said: “Westchester County has been at the forefront of investigating and responding to equity issues in maternal mortality and morbidity. Once you see the numbers, you can’t un-see them; we have put funding for programs to improve outcomes for Black maternal health and will continue to have events such as this to educate and learn and share best practices.”

Westchester County Women’s Advisory Board (WAB) Co-Chair Sarah DeRise said: “The WAB helped to identify birth equity as a major issue affecting women in the County, and we fought to make it a priority. The only way we can affect change is to increase awareness. Events like these are imperative to making the shift towards better outcomes for black and brown birthing women. When we all come together to share and implement what we learn, everyone wins.”

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