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## **Stillbirth Prevention Advocates in Trenton Gather for Empty Stroller Walk on Oct. 15 as Part of The Big PUSH to End Preventable Stillbirth**

***Big PUSH New Jersey will shine a light on the nation's stillbirth crisis, which impacts more than 23,000 families in the U.S. every year.***

**TRENTON, NJ – Oct. 1, 2022-** On Saturday, Oct. 15, 2022, [The 2 Degrees Foundation](#) will join passionate stillbirth prevention organizations and advocates for The Big PUSH to End Preventable Stillbirth, which is being organized by [PUSH for Empowered Pregnancy](#). The 2 Degrees Foundation invites you to join them at The State House Annex in Trenton at 1pm to honor all babies gone too soon and shine a light on ways to prevent stillbirth in New Jersey and across the U.S. Walkers are encouraged to push an empty stroller to represent the more than 23,000 babies who are stillborn each year in the U.S.

The Big PUSH will be held in Washington, D.C. and at satellite events across the U.S. on Oct. 15, which is Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day. National satellite events are being held in New Jersey, Florida, Iowa, Colorado, Wisconsin, and Virginia to name a few. It marks the first time that bereaved parents and stillbirth prevention advocates across the country will gather en masse to raise awareness of the tragedy of stillbirth and push to help improve birth outcomes.

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC), approximately 700 babies are born still every year in New Jersey. The Big PUSH calls for leaders in maternal health, medicine, government, and community to join the effort to improve birth outcomes in the U.S. by supporting stillbirth prevention programming and research.

**“My life irrevocably changed the moment my daughter Autumn was born still. Time stopped moving for me that day, and my life has never been the same since,”** said Debbie Haine Vijayvergiya, a NJ mother who co-founded the 2 Degrees Foundation with fellow NJ mom Stacey Matarazzo Dinburg after they both lost their babies, to increase awareness and education about stillbirth. **“For far too long, stillbirth has remained a silent public health crisis. We cannot continue down this path, it’s unacceptable that nearly 700 babies are stillborn every year here in NJ, while 23,000 stillbirths occur annually in the United States. We CAN and MUST do better for our future moms and babies! The time is now to SHINE a spotlight on stillbirth... for Autumn and all babies lost too soon!”**

The [CDC](#) defines a stillbirth as the death of a baby in utero at or after 20 weeks of pregnancy. Many of these deaths are otherwise healthy babies and occur in normal, uneventful, low-risk pregnancies. [The Big PUSH to End Preventable Stillbirth](#) is intended to alert the public that with better awareness and simple prevention strategies, a significant portion of these babies [could be saved](#), especially those that occur in the 3rd trimester.

**WHO:** The 2 Degrees Foundation is part of a coalition of over 50 nonprofit organizations in maternal/infant health and perinatal bereavement.

**WHAT:** A nationwide empty stroller march to raise awareness in honor of the 23,000 babies born still each year in the U.S. - the largest mass mobilization of bereaved families and stillbirth allies in history.

**WHERE:** The New Jersey event will be held at The State House Annex in Trenton at 1pm. Thousands of families and advocates are also expected to gather in Washington, D.C., plus thousands more at satellite marches and participating virtually across the country.

**WHY:** Research shows that at least a third of stillbirths are preventable. The United States is far behind our international peers in stillbirth reduction. Families demand change in the name of their babies who have died.

**“Two days before my due date in 2013, I walked into the hospital in labor thinking I was finally bringing home my baby girl. Instead, I walked out with empty arms and a lifetime of excruciating what-ifs,”** says PUSH Executive Director Samantha Banerjee. **“Every day, 65 U.S. families face the same brutal end to their otherwise normal and healthy pregnancies, and most of us never even heard the word ‘stillbirth’ before it happened to us. Families like mine were robbed of the chance to save our babies because no one ever bothered to inform us that stillbirth is a risk. In Alana’s name and that of the 23,000 other American children who die like her every year, we are demanding change.”**

Stillbirth is intimately correlated with other adverse pregnancy outcomes, particularly maternal mortality and morbidity. The Black Maternal Health community has rallied to stand in solidarity with this event and cause, and to advocate for stillbirth prevention strategies, many of which will likewise help close the racial disparity gap in birth outcomes.

**“The human experiences of birthing and being born are sacred rites of passage. They are essential to our current and future existence on this planet,”** says Shawnee Benton-Gibson, mother to Shamony Makeba Gibson who died at the age of 30 as a result of preventable postpartum complications in 2019. Shawnee along with Shamony’s partner, Omari Maynard, star in the Sundance Film Festival winning documentary [Aftershock](#) and will be speaking at The Big PUSH. **“When black and brown women and birthing people and their babies cannot rely on the care and covering that every member of society is entitled to, then we are all teetering on the edge of extinction.”**

- 23,000 babies are born still in the U.S. every year - that’s *1 in 169 pregnancies*
- *65 babies* are lost to stillbirth every day in the U.S. - that’s three kindergarten classes *every single day*
- Stillbirth claims more children’s lives in the U.S. each year than prematurity, SIDS, car accidents, drowning, guns, fire, flu, poison, and listeria COMBINED ([Graphic](#))
- Black mothers are *twice as likely* to suffer a stillbirth, compared to other races ([CDC Wonder](#))
- Research shows that *at least 25%* of U.S. stillbirths are [preventable](#); for term pregnancies (37+ weeks), that jumps to *nearly half (47%)* of stillbirths

- In the first 10 years of the [Count the Kicks](#) campaign in Iowa (2008-2018), the state's stillbirth rate decreased nearly 32% while the rest of the country remained relatively stagnant
- Stillbirth is closely linked to maternal mortality and morbidity - mothers who deliver a stillborn baby are *almost five times as likely* to experience severe [maternal complications](#)
- The U.S. ranks *48th out of 49* developed nations in [annual rate of reduction \(ARR\)](#) of stillbirth, and *183rd out of 195* countries worldwide ([UNICEF](#)). This is unacceptable.

PUSH for Empowered Pregnancy, The 2 Degrees Foundation, *Healthy Birth Day, Inc.*, Aaliyah in Action, MomsRising, March for Moms, National Birth Equity Collaborative (NBEC), Measure the Placenta, International Stillbirth Alliance, Pregnancy After Loss Support, ARIAH Foundation, and many other allies are joining together in the name of all babies born still to demand change. They are asking that stillbirth be explicitly included in the [Title V Maternal and Child Health \(MCH\) Block Grant](#) to encourage states to make stillbirth prevention a priority by educating families. They also ask that Congress pass the [SHINE for Autumn Act](#) - which stands for the Stillbirth Health Information and Education Act, named after stillborn baby Autumn - to fund improved stillbirth data collection in the US. This critical piece of legislation, sponsored by Senators Cory Booker (D-NJ) and Marco Rubio (R-FL), will make vital steps to invest in research required to better understand the stillbirth epidemic.

The Coalition further implores our nation's medical leaders including the American College of Obstetrics & Gynecology (ACOG) to form a Stillbirth Prevention Working Group to implement internationally proven stillbirth prevention protocols as part of standard prenatal care in the U.S. Furthermore, closing the disparity gap in birth outcomes between white and BIPOC families should be made an explicit objective of this effort.

The Big PUSH to End Preventable Stillbirth is generously supported by sponsors including Earth Mama Organics, BLVR, Nurses Choice, Mommy Labor Nurse, AWHONN, and several medical professionals and small businesses in communities across the United States.

### **About The 2 Degrees Foundation**

The 2 Degrees Foundation's vision is to provide every family in New Jersey a fighting chance against stillbirth. We strive to enhance stillbirth education, increase awareness, raise funds for research, improve bereavement support, and empower expectant moms to advocate for themselves and their babies statewide.

### **About PUSH for Empowered Pregnancy**

PUSH for Empowered Pregnancy exists for one reason, and one reason alone: to cut the US stillbirth rate by 20% by the end of 2030, in half by 2050, and in time, eradicate all preventable stillbirths. We are a diverse coalition of bereaved parents from around the country, and we are working closely with trailblazing medical researchers, courageous doctors, and other hardworking allies to drive down the incidence of stillbirth in the United States over the next decade by any means necessary.

Learn more at [www.pushpregnancy.org](http://www.pushpregnancy.org) // Register for this event at [www.thebigpushmarch.org](http://www.thebigpushmarch.org) and RSVP at <https://fb.me/e/5MWGWfHWt>