



National Black Nurses Association, Inc.
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Immediate Release

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Statement on the Death of Dr. Janell Green Smith, DNP, CNM, APRN

Silver Spring, MD - The National Black Nurses Association (NBNA) mourns the devastating death of Dr. Janell Green Smith, DNP, CNM, APRN—a Black midwife, scholar, educator, and maternal health advocate whose life’s work was rooted in advancing safe, respectful, and evidence-based care for birthing people.

Dr. Green Smith was not only a clinician but a contributor to the intellectual and ethical foundation of midwifery and maternal health. Through her scholarship, teaching, and advocacy, she worked to expand knowledge, elevate standards of care, and protect the dignity and lives of mothers and babies. She understood the science. She understood the systems. She understood the stakes.

- **That a Black midwife and maternal health expert died from complications of childbirth in the United States is both heartbreakingly unacceptable. Her death lays bare a truth the data have long confirmed: Black women—regardless of education, professional expertise, or proximity to healthcare—remain at disproportionate risk during pregnancy and childbirth due to systemic failures in care.**

As nurses, we know this loss cannot be framed as an isolated tragedy. It is inseparable from a national Black maternal health crisis shaped by inequity, bias, and structural neglect. Dr. Green Smith’s knowledge did not shield her. Her credentials did not protect her. That reality demands more than reflection; it demands accountability.

NBNA honors Dr. Green Smith’s legacy not only by remembering who she was, but by committing to the future she believed in. We affirm our responsibility to help make the world safer for her child, for a generation that deserves systems of care where Black mothers live, thrive, and return home.



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We stand with Dr. Green Smith's family, colleagues, and community in grief and resolve. We recommit ourselves to sustained advocacy, structural change, and the unfinished work of making Black maternal health a matter of justice, not chance.

Respectfully Submitted – The NBNA Black Maternal Health Equity Taskforce



About the National Black Nurses Association

Founded in 1971, the National Black Nurses Association (NBNA) represents approximately 308,000 Black registered nurses, licensed vocational/practical nurses, and nursing students in 115 chapters across the United States, the Eastern Caribbean, and Africa. NBNA's mission is to serve as the voice for Black nurses and diverse populations, promoting equity in healthcare and advancing the professional and educational development of nurses worldwide.

For more information, visit www.nbna.org