

April 21, 2023

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin  
Chairwoman, Senate Appropriations Committee  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
Room S-128, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Robert Aderholt  
Chair, House Appropriations Committee  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito  
Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Committee  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
Room S-128, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member, House Appropriations Committee  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education, and Related Agencies  
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman Baldwin, Ranking Member Capito, Chairman Aderholt, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

We, the 90 undersigned organizations who represent and care for the health and wellness of mothers, babies, and families, are writing to request funding and provisions to address maternal mental health as the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress considers the Fiscal Year 2024 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill. In the 117th Congress, Congress passed the *Into the Light for Maternal Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders Act of 2022 (Into the Light)* within the *Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023*. *Into the Light* reauthorized state grants to address maternal mental health and authorized the national Maternal Mental Health Hotline.

The United States is facing a maternal mortality crisis. According to a recent report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, maternal mortality nearly doubled from 2018 to 2021 (from 658 deaths in 2018 to 1,205 deaths in 2021).<sup>1</sup> This follows a September 2022 report from the CDC showing that **mental health conditions are the leading cause of maternal deaths**, and that four out of five maternal deaths were preventable.<sup>2</sup>

***By investing in maternal mental health, Congress can help save the lives of mothers across the country.***

Maternal mental health (MMH) conditions\* are the most common complication of pregnancy and childbirth, affecting one in five pregnant women or new mothers, or 800,000 American families each year.<sup>3,4</sup> Women

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<sup>1</sup> Hoyert, Donna L. *Maternal Mortality Rates in the United States, 2021*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, US Department of Health and Human Services. 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hestat/maternal-mortality/2021/maternal-mortality-rates-2021.html>

<sup>2</sup> Trost, Susanna, Jennifer Beauregard, Gyan Chandra, Fanny Njie, Jasmine Berry, Alyssa Harvey, and David A. Goodman. *Pregnancy-Related Deaths: Data from Maternal Mortality Review Committees in 36 States, 2017 - 2019*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, US Department of Health and Human Services. 2022. <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternal-mortality/erase-mm/data-mmrc.html>

\*Maternal mental health conditions include depression, anxiety disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, bipolar illness (including postpartum psychosis) and substance use disorders.

<sup>3</sup> American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. *Screening for Perinatal Depression, ACOG Committee Opinion No. 757*. *Obstet Gynecol.* 2018;132(5):e:208-12.

<sup>4</sup> Fawcett, Emily J, Nichole Fairbrother, Megan L Cox, Ian R White, and Jonathan M Fawcett. *The Prevalence of Anxiety Disorders During Pregnancy and the Postpartum Period: A Multivariate Bayesian Meta-Analysis*. *J Clin Psychiatry.* 2019;80(4):18r12527.

of color and service members experience MMH conditions at nearly twice the national average, and young mothers and women of low socioeconomic status are also at higher risk of experiencing MMH conditions.<sup>5,6,7,8</sup> Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has fueled a three-fold increase in the number of women and childbearing individuals experiencing MMH conditions.<sup>9</sup>

The vast majority (75%) of women who experience MMH symptoms remain untreated, increasing the risk of long-term negative impacts on the mother, baby and family.<sup>10,11</sup> When MMH conditions go untreated, women are at higher risk of suicide and overdose, which is tragically the leading cause of death for new mothers, accounting for 22% of maternal deaths.<sup>12</sup> The economic cost of not treating MMH conditions is \$32,000 per mother/infant dyad, or \$14 billion each year in addressing poor health outcomes of mother and baby, as well as lost wages, and productivity.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, we write to request funding at levels authorized under the *Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023* (P.L. 117-328) for two specific programs which increase support and treatment for mothers experiencing MMH conditions.

1. **Grants to states.** The Health Resources and Services Administration implements the Screening and Treatment for Maternal Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders program, which provides grants to states to address MMH conditions. When the program was announced in 2018, thirty states and territories applied for funding, but budget limitations resulted in just seven states receiving grants. These states have created programs that both expand the workforce to address MMH conditions and provide critically needed and cost-effective services to pregnant women and new mothers suffering from MMH conditions. We thank the Committees for including an additional \$3.5 million in funding for FY2023 Appropriations, but we recognize a need for additional funding to support additional states. Each additional \$5 million allows for 7 additional state grants. *We request the highest possible funding amount in FY2024 to support new perinatal psychiatry access programs, coordination with existing maternal mental health programs, technical assistance for non-grantee states, public awareness, and funding for programs that address disparities and substance issues for mothers.*
2. **National Maternal Mental Health Hotline.** The Hotline, which launched on Mother's Day 2022, provides 24/7 voice and text services in both English and Spanish for individuals experiencing MMH

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<sup>5</sup> Taylor, Jamila, and Christy M Gamble. *Suffering in Silence: Mood Disorders Among Pregnant and Postpartum Women of Color*. Center for American Progress, November 2019. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/suffering-in-silence/>.

<sup>6</sup> Government Accountability Office. *Defense Health Care: Prevalence of and Efforts to Screen and Treat Mental Health Conditions in Prenatal and Postpartum TRICARE Beneficiaries*. May 23, 2022. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-22-105136>

<sup>7</sup> Agnafors, Sara, Marie Bladh, Svedin, Carl Göran Svedin, and Gunilla Sydsjö. *Mental Health in Young Mothers, Single Mothers and Their Children*. BMC Psychiatry 19, 112 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-019-2082-y>

<sup>8</sup> Goyal, Deepika, Caryl Gay, and Kathryn A. Lee. *How Much Does Low Socioeconomic Status Increase the Risk of Prenatal and Postpartum Depressive Symptoms in First-Time Mothers?*. February 4, 2010, DOI: 10.1016/j.whi.2009.11.003

<sup>9</sup> Suwalska, Julia, Maria Napierała, Paweł Bogdański, Dorota Łojko, Katarzyna Wszolek, Sara Suchowiak, and Aleksandra Suwalska. *Perinatal Mental Health during COVID-19 Pandemic: An Integrative Review and Implications for Clinical Practice*. Journal of Clinical Medicine. 2021; 10, no. 11: 2406. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jcm10112406>

<sup>10</sup> Byatt, Nancy, Leonard L Levin, Douglas Ziedonis, Tiffany A Moore Simas, and Jeroan Allison. *Enhancing Participation in Depression Care in Outpatient Perinatal Care Settings: A Systematic Review*. Obstet Gynecol. 2015;126(5):619-625.

<sup>11</sup> Field, Tiffany. *Postpartum Depression Effects on Early Interactions, Parenting, and Safety Practices: A Review*. Infant Behavioral Health, 2010; 33(1):1-14.

<sup>12</sup> Trost, Susanna, et al. *Pregnancy-Related Deaths: Data from Maternal Mortality Review Committees in 36 States, 2017 - 2019*. CDC.

<sup>13</sup> Luca, Dara Lee, Caroline Margiotta, Colleen Staatz, Eleanor Garlow, Anna Christensen, and Kara Zivin. *Financial Toll of Untreated Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders Among 2017 Births in the United States*. American Journal of Public Health. 2022; 110, 888\_896, <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2020.305619>

conditions and their loved ones. Staff for the Hotline include licensed and certified healthcare or mental health providers, along with certified peer specialists. In the first nine months of operations, the Hotline responded to 7,500 contacts (70% calls, 30% texts) with an average answer time of less than 60 seconds. We thank the Committees for the \$3 million increase in FY2023 Appropriations which was needed to expand services to include maternal substance use disorder support and provide culturally and linguistically appropriate care. *We request an additional \$3 million in FY2024 funding for the Hotline to train hotline counselors on best practices to support the unique needs of service members, veterans, and military families utilizing the hotline, and to conduct a public awareness campaign to reach more pregnant and postpartum women.*

Your support for increased resources for the state grants and the Hotline, as well as for increased maternal mental health research, will save lives and help families thrive.

Sincerely,

Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
American Psychiatric Association  
Arbit Counseling  
Association of Maternal Child Health Professionals  
Brii Biosciences  
Community Health Centers of Burlington  
Compass Health  
Cornell University  
Emory University  
Every Mother Counts  
Families USA  
Feed Your Mental  
Forward Wellness Final  
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice  
Hand to Hold  
Happiest Baby  
Harvard University  
Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies: the Montana Coalition  
HealthyWomen  
Heart and Hands Healthcare  
Hope for HIE  
International OCD Foundation  
Jennifer Bush-Lawson Foundation  
Kent Hospital  
Legacy Community Health  
Legal Action Center  
Marce Society of North America  
March For Moms

March of Dimes Foundation  
Maternal Wellness Services  
Maternal Mental Health NOW  
Medical University of South Carolina  
Mental Health America of Ohio  
Military Birth Resource Network and Postpartum Coalition  
Mom2Mom Global  
Moms Mental Health Initiative  
MomsRising  
National Alliance on Mental Illness  
National Birth Equity Collaborative  
National Domestic Violence Hotline  
New York Perinatal Psychiatry  
No Health Without Mental Health  
North American Society for Psychosocial Obstetrics and Gynecology  
Northwestern Medicine  
Ohana Home Front  
Parent and Child Education (PACE)  
Perinatal Support Washington  
Policy Center for Maternal Mental Health  
Postpartum Resource Center of New York  
Postpartum Support International  
Postpartum Support International, Alaska Chapter  
Postpartum Support International, California Chapter  
Reproductive Psychiatry Trainees  
Return To Zero: H.O.P.E.  
RI International  
Selectronics Corporation  
Seleni Institute  
Seven Starling  
Shades of Blue Project  
Shades of You, Shades of Me  
Society for Women's Health Research  
The Colette Louise Tisdahl Foundation  
The Family Place  
The Ohio State University School of Engineering  
The Reilly Group  
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
The University of Vermont Health Network  
Tuftsmedicine  
Tulane University  
UMass Memorial Health Care  
University of California, San Francisco  
University of California, San Diego  
University of Kansas Medical Center

University of Minnesota  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
University of Pennsylvania  
University of Pittsburgh Medical Center  
University of Toronto  
University of Virginia  
West Virginia University  
What To Expect Project  
Wheat Shroyer  
William & Mary College  
Women's Therapy and Wellness