



July 7, 2020

The Honorable Joseph Kennedy III  
304 Cannon House Office Building  
United States Capitol  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Lauren Underwood  
1118 Longworth House Office Building  
United States Capitol  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Representatives Kennedy and Underwood,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations representing maternal and mental health providers, researchers, and mothers across the nation, we thank you for your leadership in introducing H.R. 6143, The Moms MATTER Act of 2020. This important legislation will bring long-overdue attention and support to new mothers suffering maternal mental health (MMH) conditions.

In normal times, 1 in 5 women are affected by anxiety, depression, and other maternal mental health (MMH) conditions during pregnancy or the year following pregnancy; in fact, these illnesses – which often go undiagnosed and untreated -- are the most common complication of pregnancy and childbirth, impacting 800,000 women in the United States each year.

***We are living in unprecedented times with pregnant and postpartum women experiencing unparalleled levels of stress and anxiety.*** A new study showing that rates of women reporting anxiety and depression **tripled** from mid-April to early May.<sup>1</sup> Three important factors are a “perfect storm” causing this crisis:

- Maternal mortality rates are at an all-time high with the United States having the highest maternal mortality rate in the developed world.<sup>2</sup>
- The coronavirus pandemic has opened a Pandora’s box of concerns for pregnant women, who worry about how they, their pregnancies, and their infants will be affected. The attendant social and physical isolation have decreased access to healthcare and social supports that are so important to women during pregnancy and postpartum.
- Systemic racism has erupted into significant social unrest with Black mothers fearing every day that their children might die simply because of the color of their skin.

***Moreover, women of color and women living in poverty are disproportionately impacted*** by maternal mortality, the coronavirus, and racism, further exacerbating the negative effects of these forces.

We are committed to raising awareness and supporting efforts to address MMH conditions and are pleased to endorse H.R. 6143. Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Executive Director  
2020Mom Project

Executive Director  
Maternal Mental Health  
Leadership Alliance

Executive Director  
Postpartum Support International

<sup>1</sup> Davenport, M., et al. (2020). *Moms are Not OK: COVID-19 and Maternal Mental Health*. Front. Glob. Womens Health.

<sup>2</sup> Building U.S. Capacity to Review and Prevent Maternal Deaths. (2018). Report from nine maternal mortality review committees. Retrieved from [http://reviewtoaction.org/Report\\_from\\_Nine\\_MMRCs](http://reviewtoaction.org/Report_from_Nine_MMRCs).