



July 7, 2020

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal  
706 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Tim Kaine  
231 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510

Dear Senators Blumenthal and Kaine,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations representing maternal and mental health providers, researchers, researchers, and mothers across the nation, we thank you for your leadership in introducing S. 3809, The Military Moms Mental Health Assessment Act. This important legislation will bring long-overdue attention and support to new mothers suffering anxiety, depression, and other maternal mental health conditions.

Maternal mental health conditions (MMH) are the MOST COMMON complications of pregnancy and childbirth, affecting 1 in 5 women during pregnancy or the first year following pregnancy. Female members of the military community, including members of the Armed Forces and military spouses, are particularly vulnerable to MMH conditions given the unique challenges these individuals face due to frequent deployments and moves, along with social isolation and distance from families of origin.

In addition, 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 mothers 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 S. 3809. Thank you for your leadership on 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).