March 15, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Chairwoman, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions  
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr  
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions  
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of over 125 of the nation’s leaders in maternal health, mental health, and infant health care policy, we write to express our strong support for H.R. 7073/S. 3824 the Into the Light for Maternal Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders Act of 2022 (Into the Light Act). The bipartisan Into the Light Act, led by Senators Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Assistant Speaker Katherine Clark (D-MA) and Representatives Jaime Herrera Beutler (R-WA), Michael Burgess, M.D. (R-TX), Yvette Clarke (D-NY), Doris Matsui (D-CA), and Young Kim (R-CA) will reauthorize and expand the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration’s (HRSA) grant program for Screening and Treatment for Maternal Mental Health under the 21st Century Cures Act (P.L. 114-255) and authorize the maternal mental health hotline established under the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (P.L. 116-260).

The most common complication of pregnancy is a mental health condition, and the leading causes of death for new mothers are suicide and overdose. To address these tragedies affecting America’s families, the Into the Light Act is a practical measure that broadens the reach of HRSA’s successful grant-funded programs addressing mental health during pregnancy and postpartum from 7 to 30 states to bridge gaps and promote health equity. We request that this bipartisan bill be promptly considered by the Senate HELP Committee and included in upcoming 21st Century CURES Act Reauthorization.

Maternal mental health conditions -- including depression, anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and substance use disorder -- are serious illnesses that begin during pregnancy or the year following pregnancy, and affect 1 in 5 pregnant and postpartum people. These illnesses are the most common pregnancy complication, adversely impacting 800,000 families each year in the United States. Unfortunately, as many as 75% of those affected never receive treatment, resulting in potential negative long-term negative consequences for the health and well-being of parents, infants, and families.

7 Ibid.
Moreover, the cost of untreated maternal mental health condition is $14.2 billion each year (or $32,000 per mother-infant pair) in health costs as well as lost wages and productivity of affected parents.9 The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed an existing maternal mental health and substance use crisis to catastrophic levels, with pregnant and postpartum patients reporting a threefold increase in symptoms of anxiety and depression.10,11

The well-documented racial inequities in maternal health outcomes also extend to maternal mental health. Individuals facing racial or economic inequities are more likely to be affected by these conditions but have less access to screening or treatment.12 In the United States, more than half of infants in low-income families are being cared for by a mother with some level of depressive symptoms.13 These same infants are also likely to suffer intergenerational effects: maternal mental health disorders increase the likelihood of preterm birth, low birthweight delivery, and infant mortality; impair parent-infant bonding; and can lead to behavioral, cognitive, and emotional impacts on the child.14,15 Any federal action on mental health and substance use must therefore prioritize expansion of maternal mental health care.

The timely and bipartisan Into the Light Act would take simple steps to scale-up and fortify the programs that support, screen, and treat pregnant and postpartum individuals. The bill implements recommendations from states to expand HRSA’s Screening and Treatment for Maternal Mental Health grants, increasing the number of state programs from 7 to 30. These grants fund state programs such as Psychiatry Access Programs, which allow frontline healthcare providers real-time psychiatric consultation in which a specialist guides screening, brief intervention, and referral for maternal mental health conditions. The Into the Light Act further builds upon current grants by adding trainings in culturally-appropriate care and technical assistance from HRSA to help state grantees with implementation. Finally, the Into the Light Act authorizes the maternal mental health hotline, allowing for a nationally operated 24/7 real-time voice and text access resource for emotional support, information, and brief intervention for individuals and families affected by maternal mental health conditions.

Now more than ever, emotional support, education, screening, and treatment are critical to the physical and mental health of new parents and their infants. The Into the Light Act will build capacity for critically needed and cost-effective programs for pregnant and postpartum individuals at the most vulnerable time in their lives. To protect new parents and future generations, we urge the Senate HELP Committee to bring forward bipartisan, common-sense measures like the Into the Light Act for consideration in 21st Century CURES Reauthorization.

9 Societal Costs of Untreated Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders in the United States (mathematica.org)
13 CLASP; Maternal Depression and Young Adult Mental Health
14 Maternal anxiety, mother-infant interactions, and infant's response to challenge (psu.edu)
15 A Meta-analysis of Depression During Pregnancy and the Risk of Preterm Birth, Low Birth Weight, and Intrauterine Growth Restriction (nih.gov)
Sincerely,

Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance
& Mother
2020 Mom
Amara Acupuncture
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American College of Nurse-Midwives
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
Anna Maling, LGPC private practice
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Ashley Rideout LCSW
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Baby Caravan
Best of You, LLC
Bethesda Women's Mental Health Center
Black Women's Health Imperative
Central Jersey Family Health Consortium
Chamber of Mothers
Cherished Mom
Childbirth and Postpartum Professional Association (CAPPA)
Children's Home Society of Florida
Collaborative Family Healthcare Association
Daniel N. Sacks MD PA
Danielle Cotter LLC
DC Metro Perinatal Mental Health Collaborative
Dear Sunday Motherhood
Eclectic DC
EmmaWell
Every Mother Counts
Feed Your Mental LLC
Gemma
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
Hand to Hold
HealthyWomen
Heidi Cox Psychology PLLC
Heidi Koss, MA, LMHC, PLLC
Hope for Hypoxic Ischemic Encephalopathy
Hyperemesis Education and Research Foundation
International OCD Foundation
International Society of Psychiatric Mental Health Nurses
Ivy Counseling & Wellness Services, LLC
Kayce Hodos, LPC
Komae
LA Best Babies Network
Laurel Hicks LLC
Liberation-Based Therapy
Life Beyond the Vines
Lifeline for Families Center at the UMass Chan Medical School
Lifeline for Moms Program at the UMass Chan Medical School
Live Life Unlimited Counseling
Love Makes a Family LLC
Major Care
Mammha
Marce of North American Perinatal Mental Health Society
March for Moms
March of Dimes
Maternal and Perinatal Services, LLC
Maternal Mental Health NOW
Medical University of South Carolina
Mental Health America
Mental Health America of Kentucky
Mental Health America of Ohio
mission:motherhood
MomsRising
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women’s Health
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Federation of Families
National League for Nursing
National Partnership for Women & Families
Niivana Telehealth
North American Society for Psychosocial Obstetrics & Gynecology (NASPOG)
Not Safe For Mom Group (NSFMG)
Nurtured Well, LLC
Parent Child Center of Northwestern Counseling & Support Services
Parents After Childbirth Education (PACE)
PCBH Strategies, LLC
Pediatrics
Perigee Fund
Perinatal Support Washington
Postpartum Resource Center of New York
Postpartum Support International
Postpartum Support International - Alaska
Postpartum Support International - Arkansas
Postpartum Support International - Colorado
Postpartum Support International - Delaware
Postpartum Support International - Louisiana
Postpartum Support International - Massachusetts
Postpartum Support International - New Jersey
Postpartum Support International - New York
Postpartum Support International - North Carolina
Postpartum Support International - Pennsylvania
Postpartum Support International - South Carolina
Postpartum Support Virginia
PRISM for Moms
Psychotherapy Action Network
Restoring Our Own Through Transformation (ROOTT)

Return to Zero: HOPE

Rhode Island Maternal Psychiatry Resource Network (RI MomsPRN) Program

Run Tell Mom

Saagara, PLLC

Sarah Briggs and Associates

Shades Of Blue Project

SMART Recovery

Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine

Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine

Society for Women's Health Research

SOURCE Psychotherapy

Superkin

Susan Benjamin Feingold, PsyD and Associates LLC

The Colette Louise Tisdahl Foundation

The Family Center Mental Health Clinic

The Fifth Trimester

The Motherhood Center

Therapy of the Heart and Spirit

Totum Women

U.S. Lactation Consultant Association

University of North Carolina

Vania Manipod, DO, Inc

Wednesday Collaborative

Zero to Three

Zucker Hillside Hospital, Northwell Health