

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman, Energy and Commerce Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

September 21, 2021

Dear Chairman Pallone,

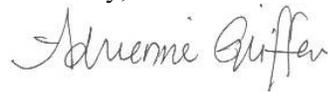
We, the leaders of organizations dedicated to the mental health and well-being of mothers and other birthing people, write to express our enthusiastic support and appreciation for the maternal mental health provisions – originally from the Moms Matter Act -- included in the Committee on Energy and Commerce print of the “Build Back Better Act.” We are committed to ***ending racial and ethnic maternal health disparities and to advancing birth equity***, and we know that the first step is providing robust funding for maternal health in general and maternal mental health specifically.

Mental health conditions are the most common complications of pregnancy and childbirth, affecting 1 in 5 pregnant or postpartum people, or 800,000 new parents each year in the United States. Sadly, 75% of those impacted by these illnesses go untreated, increasing the risk of multigenerational long-term negative impact of the physical, emotional, and developmental health of the mother and child. The COVID-19 pandemic has fueled a three-fold increase in women reporting symptoms of anxiety and depression during pregnancy, and recent studies show that suicide and overdose combined are the leading cause of death for women in the first year following pregnancy. Women facing economic or racial inequities are disproportionately impacted by both maternal mental health issues and the pandemic, further exacerbating the negative effects of these issues. In addition to the personal cost, the societal cost of not treating maternal mental health conditions is significant \$14 billion in 2017, attributable to the poor health outcomes of mother and baby and lost wages and productivity of the mother.

Access to mental health care is critical to the overall health of both mothers and their newborns, now more than ever. Increased funding for maternal mental health equity grants will go a long way in ensuring that mothers, and their babies, have access to the care they need to thrive.

Thank you for your attention and leadership on this critical issue. Should you have any questions, please contact Jamie Zahlaway Belsito at jbelsito@mmhla.org or 978.998.1160.

Sincerely,



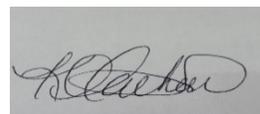
Adrienne Griffen, MPP
Executive Director
Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance



Wendy Davis, PhD
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Joy Burkhard, MBA
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2020Mom



Kay Mathews, LCHW
Founder
The Shades of Blue Project

Cc: Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy