

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.^{1,2,3} 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.^{4,5,6} These illnesses are the most common pregnancy complication, adversely impacting 800,000 families each year in the United States.⁷ Unfortunately, as many as 75% of those affected never receive treatment,⁸ resulting in potential negative long-term negative consequences for the health and well-being of parents, infants, and families.

¹ Davis NL, Smoots, AN, Goodman DA. Pregnancy-related deaths: data from 4 U.S. Maternal Mortality Review Committees, 2008-2017 [Internet] Atlanta (GA): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2019.

² Goldman-Mellor D, Margerison CE. Maternal drug-related death and suicide are leading causes of postpartum death in California. *Am J Obstet Gynecol.* 2019;221:489.e1-9.

³ Metz TD, Rovner P, Hoffman MC, Allshouse AA, Beckwith KM, Binswanger IA. Maternal deaths from suicide and overdose in Colorado, 2004-2012. *Obstet Gynecol.* 2016;128(6):1233-1240.

⁴ American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. ACOG Committee Opinion 7575: Screening for Perinatal Depression. *Obstet Gynecol.* 2018;132(5):E208-12.

⁵ Fawcett EJ, Fairbrother N, Cox ML, White IR, Fawcett JM. The prevalence of anxiety disorders during pregnancy and the postpartum period: a multivariate Bayesian meta-analysis. *J Clin Psychiatry.* 2019;80(4):18r12527.

⁶ Gavin NI, Gayness BN, Lohr KN, Meltzer-Brody S, Gartlehner G, Swinson T. Perinatal depression: a systematic review of prevalence and incidence. *Obstet Gynecol.* 2005;106(5 Pt 1):1071-83.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Byatt N., Levin LL, Ziedonis D, Moore Simas TA, Allison J. Enhancing participation in depression care in outpatient perinatal care settings: a systematic review. *Obstet Gynecol.* 2015;126(5):1048-58.

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 \(mathematica.org\)](https://mathematica.org/publications/societal-costs-of-untreated-perinatal-mood-and-anxiety-disorders-in-the-united-states)

¹⁰ Davenport MH, Meyer S, Meah VL, Strynadka MC, Khurana R. Moms Are Not OK: COVID-19 and Maternal Mental Health. *Front Glob Womens Health*. 2020 Jun 19;1:1. doi: 10.3389/fgwh.2020.00001. PMID: 34816146; PMCID: PMC8593957.

¹¹ Lebel C, MacKinnon A, Bagshawe M, Tomfohr-Madsen L, Giesbrecht G. Elevated depression and anxiety symptoms among pregnant individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic. *J Affect Disorder*. 2020;1(277):5-13.

¹² Sidebottom A., Vacquier M, LaRusso E, Erickson D, Hardeman R. Perinatal depression screening practices in a large health system: Identifying current state and assessing opportunities to provide more equitable care. *Arch Womens Ment Health*. 2021;24(1):133-44.

¹³ CLASP: Maternal Depression and Young Adult Mental Health

¹⁴ [Maternal anxiety, mother-infant interactions, and infants' response to challenge \(psu.edu\)](https://psu.edu/research/maternal-anxiety-mother-infant-interactions-and-infants-response-to-challenge)

¹⁵ [A Meta-analysis of Depression During Pregnancy and the Risk of Preterm Birth, Low Birth Weight, and Intrauterine Growth Restriction \(nih.gov\)](https://nih.gov/research/meta-analysis-of-depression-during-pregnancy-and-the-risk-of-preterm-birth-low-birth-weight-and-intrauterine-growth-restriction)

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