March 3, 2021

The Honorable Jim Wood, Chair
Assembly Committee on Health
State Capitol, Room 6005
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 935 (Maienschein), Mothers and Children Mental Health Support Act of 2020 - SUPPORT

Dear Chairman Wood:

On behalf of OCHIN, I am pleased to offer our support of AB 935 (Maienschein), which will expand access to mental health services for pregnant, postpartum, and pediatric patients via telehealth and remove barriers for historically underserved communities.

OCHIN is a national, non-profit community-based health information technology and research network, and a national leader in promoting high-quality health care in historically underserved communities across the country. OCHIN’s network of community providers includes 36 California members including 23 that offer behavioral health services. In 2020, 36% of the encounters by OCHIN’s California members’ patients were via telehealth.

Innovation in healthcare is critical for improving care coordination and outcomes, especially for those considered historically underserved. Maternal and infant mortality rates in the United States exceed other countries with similar gross domestic products around the world. Further, in the U.S. there are marked disparities, with racially and ethnically diverse women and children seeing as much as four times the death rate among certain maternal age groups.¹ These disparities reflect increased barriers to care that can be overcome by innovations like telehealth when combined with expanded coverage, payment parity, and access to broadband.

During the COVID-19 public health emergency, behavioral health providers in the OCHIN network have delivered care to their patients via telehealth. Delivering mental health services using telehealth assists patients overcome obstacles to access such as transportation, time, and, most relevant to maternal patients, childcare.

Expanding virtual access to mental health services for maternal and pediatric patients through AB 935 both during and after the COVID-19 public health emergency will drive equity while reducing disparities in maternal care prevalent today.

For all these reasons, we are pleased to support and ask for your “aye” vote on AB 935. Please contact me at stollj@ochin.org should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Stoll
Executive Vice President
Government Relations & Public Affairs

CC: The Honorable Brian Maienschein
Members, Assembly Committee on Health