Dear Chairwoman Baldwin, Ranking Member Capito, Chairman Aderholt, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

We, the 90 undersigned organizations who represent and care for the health and wellness of mothers, babies, and families, are writing to request funding and provisions to address maternal mental health as the 118th Congress considers the Fiscal Year 2024 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill. In the 117th Congress, Congress passed the *Into the Light for Maternal Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders Act of 2022 (Into the Light)* within the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023. *Into the Light* reauthorized state grants to address maternal mental health and authorized the national Maternal Mental Health Hotline.

The United States is facing a maternal mortality crisis. According to a recent report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, maternal mortality nearly doubled from 2018 to 2021 (from 658 deaths in 2018 to 1,205 deaths in 2021).\(^1\) This follows a September 2022 report from the CDC showing that **mental health conditions are the leading cause of maternal deaths**, and that four out of five maternal deaths were preventable.\(^2\)

*By investing in maternal mental health, Congress can help save the lives of mothers across the country.*

Maternal mental health (MMH) conditions* are the most common complication of pregnancy and childbirth, affecting one in five pregnant women or new mothers, or 800,000 American families each year.\(^3,4\)

---

3. Maternal mental health conditions include depression, anxiety disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, bipolar illness (including postpartum psychosis) and substance use disorders.
of color and service members experience MMH conditions at nearly twice the national average, and young mothers and women of low socioeconomic status are also at higher risk of experiencing MMH conditions.6,7,8 Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has fueled a three-fold increase in the number of women and childbearing individuals experiencing MMH conditions.9

The vast majority (75%) of women who experience MMH symptoms remain untreated, increasing the risk of long-term negative impacts on the mother, baby and family.10,11 When MMH conditions go untreated, women are at higher risk of suicide and overdose, which is tragically the leading cause of death for new mothers, accounting for 22% of maternal deaths.12 The economic cost of not treating MMH conditions is $32,000 per mother/infant dyad, or $14 billion each year in addressing poor health outcomes of mother and baby, as well as lost wages, and productivity.13

Thus, we write to request funding at levels authorized under the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 (P.L. 117-328) for two specific programs which increase support and treatment for mothers experiencing MMH conditions.

1. Grants to states. The Health Resources and Services Administration implements the Screening and Treatment for Maternal Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders program, which provides grants to states to address MMH conditions. When the program was announced in 2018, thirty states and territories applied for funding, but budget limitations resulted in just seven states receiving grants. These states have created programs that both expand the workforce to address MMH conditions and provide critically needed and cost-effective services to pregnant women and new mothers suffering from MMH conditions. We thank the Committees for including an additional $3.5 million in funding for FY2023 Appropriations, but we recognize a need for additional funding to support additional states. Each additional $5 million allows for 7 additional state grants. We request the highest possible funding amount in FY2024 to support new perinatal psychiatry access programs, coordination with existing maternal mental health programs, technical assistance for non-grantee states, public awareness, and funding for programs that address disparities and substance issues for mothers.

2. National Maternal Mental Health Hotline. The Hotline, which launched on Mother’s Day 2022, provides 24/7 voice and text services in both English and Spanish for individuals experiencing MMH

---

conditions and their loved ones. Staff for the Hotline include licensed and certified healthcare or mental health providers, along with certified peer specialists. In the first nine months of operations, the Hotline responded to 7,500 contacts (70% calls, 30% texts) with an average answer time of less than 60 seconds. We thank the Committees for the $3 million increase in FY2023 Appropriations which was needed to expand services to include maternal substance use disorder support and provide culturally and linguistically appropriate care. We request an additional $3 million in FY2024 funding for the Hotline to train hotline counselors on best practices to support the unique needs of service members, veterans, and military families utilizing the hotline, and to conduct a public awareness campaign to reach more pregnant and postpartum women.

Your support for increased resources for the state grants and the Hotline, as well as for increased maternal mental health research, will save lives and help families thrive.

Sincerely,

Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Psychiatric Association
Arbit Counseling
Association of Maternal Child Health Professionals
Brii Biosciences
Community Health Centers of Burlington
Compass Health
Cornell University
Emory University
Every Mother Counts
Families USA
Feed Your Mental
Forward Wellness Final
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
Hand to Hold
Happiest Baby
Harvard University
Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies: the Montana Coalition
HealthyWomen
Heart and Hands Healthcare
Hope for HIE
International OCD Foundation
Jennifer Bush-Lawson Foundation
Kent Hospital
Legacy Community Health
Legal Action Center
Marce Society of North America
March For Moms
March of Dimes Foundation
Maternal Wellness Services
Maternal Mental Health NOW
Medical University of South Carolina
Mental Health America of Ohio
Military Birth Resource Network and Postpartum Coalition
Mom2Mom Global
Moms Mental Health Initiative
MomsRising
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Birth Equity Collaborative
National Domestic Violence Hotline
New York Perinatal Psychiatry
No Health Without Mental Health
North American Society for Psychosocial Obstetrics and Gynecology
Northwestern Medicine
Ohana Home Front
Parent and Child Education (PACE)
Perinatal Support Washington
Policy Center for Maternal Mental Health
Postpartum Resource Center of New York
Postpartum Support International
Postpartum Support International, Alaska Chapter
Postpartum Support International, California Chapter
Reproductive Psychiatry Trainees
Return To Zero: H.O.P.E.
RI International
Selectronics Corporation
Seleni Institute
Seven Starling
Shades of Blue Project
Shades of You, Shades of Me
Society for Women's Health Research
The Colette Louise Tisdahl Foundation
The Family Place
The Ohio State University School of Engineering
The Reilly Group
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
The University of Vermont Health Network
Tuftsmedicine
Tulane University
UMass Memorial Health Care
University of California, San Francisco
University of California, San Diego
University of Kansas Medical Center
University of Minnesota
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
University of Pennsylvania
University of Pittsburgh Medical Center
University of Toronto
University of Virginia
West Virginia University
What To Expect Project
Wheat Shroyer
William & Mary College
Women's Therapy and Wellness