

October X, 2023

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chairwoman, Senate Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Appropriations Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chairman, House Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Appropriations Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Shelly Moore Capito
Ranking Member, Senate Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Appropriations Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member, House Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Appropriations Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Baldwin, Ranking Member Capito, Chairman Aderholt, and Ranking Member DeLauro,

On behalf of the undersigned national, regional, and local organizations in the maternal, children, and mental health space who support the health and wellbeing of pregnant women and new mothers, we would like to thank you for your continued support of vital maternal mental health programs. These programs help take the pressure off our overburdened health care system, keep families whole, and save lives. We respectfully request the inclusion of the **Senate's \$11 million, a \$1 million increase, and report language for the Maternal Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Grants (MMHSUD) Program and the \$7 million in level funding in addition to the House of Representative's LHHS report language for the Maternal Mental Health Hotline** within the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Labor, Health, and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) appropriations package.

In the United States, 1 in 5 women are affected by maternal mental health (MMH) conditions – including anxiety, depression, substance use disorder -- during pregnancy or the year following pregnancy.¹ These illnesses are the most common complications of pregnancy and childbirth, impacting 800,000 American families each year.² Women of color, servicemembers, and military spouses experience MMH conditions at nearly twice the national average.^{3,4,5} Unfortunately, 75% of women remain untreated, costing our nation \$14 billion each year.^{6,7} MMH conditions contribute to the United States' high maternal mortality rate, with suicide and overdose being the leading cause of death for women in the first year following pregnancy.⁸

The *Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 (PL 117-328)* included the bipartisan, bicameral *Into the Light for Maternal Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Act*, which reauthorized the Maternal Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder (MMHSUD) State Grant Program and increased annual funding from \$5 million to \$24 million. When this program was initially launched in 2018, 30 states and territories applied but limited funding meant only seven states received grants.⁹ We commend the Committee for increasing appropriations to \$10 million in FY23 and are pleased to report that the following twelve states were awarded grants on September 27:

¹ ACOG Committee Opinion 757 (2018).

² Luca, D., Garlow, N., Staats, C., & Zivin, K. (2019). Societal Costs of Untreated Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders in the United States. *Mathematica Policy Research*.

³ Taylor, Jamila, and Christy M Gamble. *Suffering in Silence: Mood Disorders Among Pregnant and Postpartum Women of Color*. Center for American Progress, November 2019. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/suffering-in-silence/>.

⁴ Government Accountability Office. *Defense Health Care: Prevalence of and Efforts to Screen and Treat Mental Health Conditions in Prenatal and Postpartum TRICARE Beneficiaries*. May 23, 2022. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-22-105136>

⁵ Agnafors, Sara, Marie Bladh, Svedin, Carl Göran Svedin, and Gunilla Sydsjö. *Mental Health in Young Mothers, Single Mothers and Their Children*. BMC Psychiatry 19, 112 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-019-2082-y>

⁶ Byatt (2015). *Obstetrics & Gynecology*, 126(5): 1048-1058.

⁷ Luca (2020). *American Journal of Public Health*, 110(6): 888-896.

⁸ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022, September 19). Four in 5 pregnancy-related deaths in the U.S. are preventable. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2022/p0919-pregnancy-related-deaths.html>

⁹ Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023, PL 117-328.

California, Colorado, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, Mississippi, Montana, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and West Virginia.

While we are disappointed that the full authorization level (\$24 million) for this program was not reached for FY23, we appreciate the Committees' continued work and funding to support our nation's mothers. **With that, we respectfully request in your conference negotiations that you include \$11 million, \$1 million over the FY23 enacted level, and report language as included in the Senate LHHS Appropriations bill and report (#118-84), for the final LHHS FY24 Appropriations package.** This additional \$1 million will allow up to two additional states to receive funding for programs that help treat women who are struggling with MMH conditions. This early intervention and support can help keep families whole, but most importantly save lives.

Second, the *Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 (PL 117-328)* also authorized the National Maternal Mental Health Hotline within the Health Services and Resources Administration (HRSA) at \$10 million in FY23. The Hotline provides 24/7 voice and text support in English and Spanish for women struggling with MMH conditions, serving over 1,000 families each month.¹⁰ **We respectfully request keeping the level funding at minimum and that in your conference negotiations that you include the report language from the House LHHS Report (#) in the final FY24 LHHS Joint Explanatory Statement for the Maternal Mental Health Hotline.** The language ensures that HRSA is fulfilling critical components of the authorization including providing support to military servicemembers and spouses, conducting a public awareness campaign to promote the Hotline, and consulting with federal agencies to increase awareness of the Hotline.¹¹

On behalf of the 4 million parents who give birth each year in the United States, we thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

¹⁰ *Celebrating one year of the National Maternal Mental Health hotline. Maternal and Child Health Bureau. HRSA. (2023, July).* <https://mchb.hrsa.gov/national-maternal-mental-health-hotline/anniversary>

¹¹ Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023, PL 117-328.