

August 22, 2024

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman
Senate Committee on Armed Services
Russell Senate Building, Room 228
Washington, D.C., 20510

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Armed Services
Russell Senate Building, Room 228
Washington, D.C., 20510

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Chairman
House Committee on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C., 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Committee on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, Chairman Rogers, and Ranking Member Smith

We, the 120 undersigned organizations who represent and care for the health and wellness of mothers, babies, and families, respectfully request that the final National Defense Authorization Act language includes the “Pilot program to prevent perinatal mental health conditions in pregnant and postpartum members of the Armed Forces and covered beneficiaries“ of H.R. 8070, the “Servicemember Quality of Life Improvement and National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025” (NDAA) within the final version of the FY 2025 NDAA. (Sec. 709 of the House-passed FY25 NDAA).

This provision is based on the bipartisan Moms Act (S. 3641/H.R. 7087) led by Sen. Shaheen (D-NH), Sen. Fischer (R-NE), Rep. Houlahan (D-PA), and Rep. Bacon (R-NE), which pilots evidence-based maternal mental health prevention programs at Military Treatment Facilities to support members of the Armed Forces and their families. These programs have been proven to prevent maternal mental health (MMH) conditions and lessen the severity of symptoms, which is essential to improve the health and readiness of pregnant members of the Armed Forces who are disproportionately impacted by MMH conditions

MMH conditions are the most common complication of pregnancy and childbirth, and the leading cause of maternal mortality in the United States, with suicide and overdose accounting for over 22% of all pregnancy-related deaths.¹ Despite the high rates of MMH conditions, the majority (75%) of women impacted will not receive treatment, increasing the risk of long-term

¹ Trost, Susanna, Jennifer Beaugard, Gyan Chandra, Fanny Njie, Jasmine Berry, Alyssa Harvey, and David A. Goodman. *Pregnancy-Related Deaths: Data from Maternal Mortality Review Committees in 36 States, 2017 - 2019*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, US Department of Health and Human Services. 2022.
<https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternal-mortality/erase-mm/data-mmrc.html>

negative impacts to mother, baby, family, and society.² The cost of not treating these conditions is significant, amounting to \$14 billion each year.³

Service members and their dependents are at increased risk of developing MMH conditions due to unique challenges that come with military service, including the effects of deployment and limited social support. While one in five civilians will develop a MMH condition during pregnancy or in the postpartum period, one in three service members will develop a MMH condition. A May 2022 report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO-22-105136), *Prevalence of and Efforts to Screen and Treat Mental Health Conditions in Prenatal and Postpartum TRICARE Beneficiaries*, found that 36% of beneficiaries (active duty, reservists, retirees, and dependents) had a mental health condition in the perinatal period, almost double the national average. Beneficiaries cited barriers in accessing care to address MMH conditions, including stigma, lack of provider availability, and privacy concerns that a diagnosis may affect career advancement.⁴

Sec. 709 included within the House-passed FY 2025 NDAA would fulfill the suggestions from the 2022 GAO report and align with the Committees' work to improve the quality of life for our nation's service members and their families. Access to programs to prevent MMH conditions and support women during pregnancy and postpartum will support force readiness and retention but will also help save lives and help families thrive.

If the committee has any questions about this letter, please contact Jamie Belsito, Director of Policy, Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance at jbelsito@mmhla.org

Sincerely,

Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance
Abrazo Health
American Academy of Pediatrics
American College of Nurse-Midwives
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Psychiatric Association
Anchor Perinatal Wellness
Angela Frazee Counseling LLC
Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago
Anna Dell Doula
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Ascension St Vincent Carmel Hospital

² Metz Torri D, Polina Rovner, M Camille Hoffman, Amanda A Allshouse, Krista M Beckwith, and Ingrid A Binswanger. *Maternal Deaths From Suicide and Overdose in Colorado, 2004-2012*. *Obstet Gynecol*. 2016;128(6):1233-1240.

³ Luca, Dara Lee, Nellie Garlow, Colleen Staatz, Caroline Margiotta, and Kara Zivin. *Societal Costs of Untreated Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders in the United States*. Mathematica Policy Research. April 29, 2019.
<https://www.mathematica.org/publications/societal-costs-of-untreated-perinatal-mood-and-anxiety-disorders-in-the-united-states>

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>

Association for Physician Associates in Obstetrics and Gynecology
At Ease Counseling
BAYA Corporation
Baylor College of Medicine
Bert Nash CMHC
Beyond the Baby Blues
Brandeis University
Building Military Families Network
BWMH
California Chapter of Postpartum Support International
California Council of Community Behavioral Health Agencies
California State University, Northridge
Central Carolina Doulas
Childbirth and Postpartum Professional Association
Chorus Community Health Plan
Columbia University Medical Center
Cradle Cincinnati/Queens Village
Cultivate Counseling
Employees Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA)
Family Road of Greater Baton Rouge Healthy Start
Feed Your Mental
Flourish Wellness Collective
Fran and Earl Ziegler College of Nursing, OUHS
George Washington University
Georgia State University
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
Global Military Lactation Community
Grow Therapy
HealthyWomen
Heat and Hands Midwifery and Family Healthcare
Honey Postpartum
Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services
Iowa ACEs 360
Jamaica Hospital
Kai Reproductive Counseling
Kyla Care Therapy
Lifeline for Families Center and the Lifeline for Moms Program at UMass Chan Medical School
Mamaya Health
Mammha
Mandala Therapy

Marce of North America
March for Moms
March of Dimes
Maternal Care Institute
McNeley-Phelps Psychological Services
Mental Health America of Ohio
Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute
Milena Hruby Smith MD, PhD, LLC
Mission: Motherhood
Moms Mental Health Initiative, Inc.
MomsRising
Montclair State University
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Military Family Association
Nemours Children's Health
North Carolina Child
North Carolina Partnership for Children
Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
Oppenheim Consulting
Parent & Family Wellness Center
PMHA-POC|PSI
Policy Center for Maternal Mental Health
Postpartum Health Los Angeles
Postpartum International - NC
Postpartum Resource Center of New York
Postpartum Support International
Postpartum Support International - AZ Chapter
Postpartum Support International California
Postpartum Support International- Military Families
Postpartum Support VA
PSI California Chapter
PSI Maine
Rebekah N. Jensen LCSW LLC
Repro Psych Trainees
Reproductive Mental Health Consultants
Return to Zero: HOPE
Rula
Sacramento Maternal Mental Health Collaborative

Seven Starling
SHIELDS for Families
Summit Healthcare
The Center for Postpartum Health
The Colette Louise Tisdahl Foundation
The Family Place
The HIVE Maternal Wellness Center
The Postpartum Adjustment Center
The Postpartum Resource Center of New York, Inc.
Tibi Health
Transition to Parenthood
Trayt Health
Trending Joy Counseling & Therapy, PLLC
Turning Point Windham County
UMass Chan Medical School
UNC BlueRidge
University of California San Diego
University of Kansas
University of Virginia
USAF United States Air Force
VA Center for Integrated Healthcare/University of Rochester Medical Center
Valentine Psychiatry PLLC
Weill Cornell Medicine
Wellbeing for Women
What to Expect Project
Whole Heart Reproductive Mental Health
WV Perinatal Partnership, Inc.
Yale University