

May 1, 2020

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairwoman
House Appropriations Committee
H-307 The Capitol
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
LHHS-ED Subcommittee
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
LHHS-ED Subcommittee
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Lowey, Ranking Member Granger, Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to request additional funding for HRSA's Screening and Treatment for Maternal Depression and Related Behavior Disorders Treatment Program in the next CARES Act supplemental.

Access to mental health care is critical to the overall health of both mothers and their newborns. The current pandemic has created significant stress and anxiety for pregnant women and new mothers, who worry that they, their fetus, or their newborn may be affected with COVID-19; that they might not be accompanied by a support person during labor and delivery; and that they might be separated from their infant following birth.

It has always been difficult for childbearing women experiencing anxiety or depression to access appropriate mental health care. However, the current situation – with an increase in the range and intensity of mental health issues new and pregnant women face coupled with the increased pressure on the healthcare system -- has made it even more challenging to access appropriate mental services.

HRSA's Screening and Treatment for Maternal Depression and Related Behavior Disorders Treatment Program provides grants to states to address maternal depression, thereby helping new mothers and their babies get off to the best start possible. States receiving funding create programs that provide real-time psychiatric consultation, care coordination, and training for front-line providers to better screen, assess, refer and treat pregnant and postpartum women for depression and other behavioral health conditions. These programs provide a critically-needed and cost-effective lifeline to pregnant women and new mothers at the most vulnerable period in their lives.

The program is currently funded at \$5 million annually. When it was introduced in FY2018, thirty states applied for funding but only seven states were awarded five-year cooperative agreements because of funding restrictions. We propose including an additional \$10 million in funding for this program in the next COVID-19 response legislation. This funding would allow 12 additional states to establish programs and provide \$2 million to allow HRSA to establish a Technical Assistance Center to provide states with best practices, training, and technical assistance so they can quickly and effectively establish these programs.

Increased funding for this program will go a long way in ensuring that mothers, and their babies, have access to the care they need to thrive during this challenging time. Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. Should you need any additional information, please contact Adrienne Griffen at the Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance at Adrienne.griffen@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

2020Mom

American Association of Suicidology
American College of Nurse Midwives
American Counseling Association
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Psychological Association
American Medical Women's Association
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric, and Neonatal Nurses
Clinical Social Work Association
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy, & Action
Every Mother Counts
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
Group Peer Support
Johns Hopkins University Women's Mood Disorders Center
Legal Action Center
Lifeline4Moms
March for Moms
March of Dimes
Marce of North America
Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance
Mental Health America
Mental Health America of Ohio
MomsRising
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
National Register of Health Services Psychologists
No Health Without Mental Health
Postpartum Resource Center of New York
Postpartum Support International
Postpartum Support Virginia
Psychotherapy Action Network
Residential Eating Disorders Consortium
Society for Maternal Fetal Medicine