

December 6, 2022

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, and Leader McCarthy,

On behalf of the 50 national, state, and local organizations in the maternal mental health, maternal mortality, and mental health equity fields, we write in gratitude and support for the following maternal mental health-related provision in the Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) Discussion Draft ([page 60](#)).

Addressing Social Determinants of Maternal Health.—The Committee includes 30,000,000 to provide grants to community-based organizations to support reducing maternal mortality and adverse maternal outcomes, as described in the fiscal year 2023 budget request. Projects may include expanding access to maternal mental health and SUD services, providing resources to address social determinants of maternal health, developing digital tools to enhance maternal healthcare, and technology-enabled collaborative learning and capacity building models for pregnant and postpartum women.

Maternal mental health conditions, including depression, anxiety, psychosis, and substance use disorder, are serious illnesses that impact as many as 1 in 5 mothers.¹ Mothers of color however suffer a disproportionate burden of these conditions in part due to higher degrees of stress² and lower levels of economic stability.³ Maternal mental health conditions are also most acute for low-income families and families of color. More than half of poor infants live with a mother who has some level of depressive symptoms,⁴ and suicidal ideation and intentional self-harm rose significantly for Black women during and after pregnancy from 2006-2017.⁵

Suicide and unintentional overdose caused by a maternal mental health condition are the leading causes of death for new mothers.⁶ In part due to these causes, Black women are three times more likely to have a maternal death than white women in the United States⁷. Efforts to lower maternal mortality in the U.S. must therefore address the primary cause of postpartum death: maternal mental health.

¹ [Screening and Treatment for Maternal Depression and Related Behavioral Disorders Program \(MDRBD\) | Maternal and Child Health Bureau \(hrsa.gov\)](#)

² study 6. Gee GC, Ford CL. Structural racism and health inequities. *Du Bois Rev.* 2011 Apr; 8(1): 115 –132.

³ [How much does Low Socioeconomic Status Increase the Risk of Prenatal and Postpartum Depressive Symptoms in First Time Mothers? \(nih.gov\)](#)

⁴ CLASP: [Maternal Depression and Young Adult Mental Health](#)

⁵ Admon, Dalton, & Kolenic: [Trends in Suicidality 1 Year Before and After Birth Among Commercially Insured Childbearing Individuals in the United States, 2006-2017](#)

⁶ [Maternal drug-related death and suicide are leading causes of postpartum death in California - American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology \(ajog.org\)](#)

⁷ [Racial and Ethnic Disparities Continue in Pregnancy-Related Deaths | CDC Online Newsroom | CDC](#)

As the FY23 Omnibus is negotiated, we respectfully urge you to include the above provision, requested by the President at \$50,000,000 and passed by the House Appropriations Committee at \$10,000,000, which has the potential to profoundly impact the lives of moms, families, and communities. We thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Shades of Blue Project

2020 Mom

American Association for Psychoanalysis in
Clinical Social Work

American Psychological Association

Anansi LLC

Anxiety and Depression Association of America

Association of Maternal & Child Health
Programs

Ausetwomb LLC

Bethesda Womens Mental Health

Chatham University

Clinical Social Work Association

Divinely Aligned Holistic Health and Healing

Eating Disorders Coalition

EmmaWell

Every Mother Counts

Families USA

Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and
Social Justice

Hand to Hold

HealthConnect One

Integrative Therapy of Greater Washington

International Society for Psychiatric Mental
Health Nurses

LA Best Babies Network

Legal Action Center

Lifeline for Families Center and Lifeline for
Moms Program at the UMass Chan Medical
School

March for Moms

March of Dimes

Massachusetts Postpartum Depression Fund

Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance

Maternal Mental Health NOW

Mental Health America

Mental Health America of Ohio

Mission: Motherhood

MomsRising

National Association of State Mental Health
Program Directors

National Eating Disorders Association

Perigee Fund

Perinatal Support Washington

Postpartum Resource Center of New York

Postpartum Support Center

RAISE Consulting

Raising Resilience Counseling Services, PLLC

REDC Consortium

Reproductive Psychology Trainee Group

Return to Zero: HOPE

San Jose State University

Seven Starling

SOURCE Psychotherapy

The Colette Louise Tisdahl Foundation

The Nesting Parent

Women's Mental Health Program, Icahn School
of Medicine at Mt Sinai

Women's Wellbeing Program, Department of
Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, UMN
MHealth Fairview