December 6, 2022

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

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

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

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. Mothers of color however suffer a disproportionate burden of these conditions in part due to higher degrees of stress and lower levels of economic stability. 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, and suicidal ideation and intentional self-harm rose significantly for Black women during and after pregnancy from 2006-2017.

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

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