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Re: Maryland Maternal Health Act of 2024 (HB1051/SB1059)

March 4, 2024

Dear Members of the Maryland House of Delegates and State Senate,
the Health and Government Operations Committee,

I urge you to vote in favor of the Maryland Maternal Health Act of 2024 (HB1051/SB1059). My name is Kyra Kolbe Vocci and I am a concerned Maryland resident and suicide survivor. My sister, Andrea Kolbe, gave birth to a beautiful baby boy on August 24, 2023. She had a normal and healthy pregnancy. But, 15 weeks later, on December 11, 2023, one day after her 35th birthday, we lost her. She took her own life because of the devastating effects of post-partum depression and psychosis.

The current lack of maternal health care, support, and resources available to new mothers is bleak and hopeless. The current healthcare system is not structured well enough to support new moms during this most vulnerable time. This bill is extremely necessary to provide new mothers and their partners with required assessments, referrals, information and care that is now so insufficient. Without these provisions in place, new mothers and their families are at risk of a devastating loss like what my family and I have endured. The pain, sadness and complicated grief has been unbearable and there are no words that could possibly convey the emotions we feel that surround this catastrophic event.

With the passage of this bill, women will leave the hospital with the information that can assist them through the post-partum depression phase, get referrals and assessments so desperately needed and thus reduce the maternal mortality rate in Maryland. 1 in 4 women die by suicide because of post-partum depression, that is staggering and should be considered a national health emergency.

On behalf of my sister, Andrea, who leaves a sweet baby boy, her husband and the rest of her beloved family and friends in shock and grief, I thank you for giving full consideration to this essential legislation.

Sincerely, Kyra Vocci