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

March 4, 2024

Dear members of the committee,

I am a wife, mom of 2, and a severe postpartum depression survivor. I support this bill as it positively addresses the lack of screening and awareness that currently exists for postpartum depression. Additionally, it will expand access to postpartum treatment and support, which is critically needed.

I struggled for nearly four months without a proper diagnosis and treatment for my postpartum depression (PPD). Though it felt unlikely at the time, in retrospect the signs of my PPD and PPA were not unusual. I was later told by a psychiatrist that I was suffering from “textbook postpartum depression” meaning that the signs could have been obvious if I had been properly informed. For someone who had no history of depression, PPD was not even on my radar. I wish I had known in my early postpartum days that PPD does not discriminate. It can impact any mother after any new baby, even if it’s not your first baby and even if you have no history of diagnosis. This is why raising awareness and demystifying PPD is so important for new mothers. This bill will provide the necessary assessments, referrals, and care that I so desperately needed.

Because of such limited preexisting support, the severity of my PPD progressed without treatment and I became actively suicidal. I finally summoned the courage to confess to my husband and family that I desperately needed help. I adamantly believe that my condition would not have progressed to the severity that it did had I received the appropriate support beforehand. My husband was fortunate to take an entire month off work to investigate treatment options for me after I nearly attempted suicide. I am acutely aware that most women do not have the privilege of spending extended time to secure treatment. It was through this diagnosis and treatment that I am alive today and able to share my story and advocate for others. I urge you to vote for the Maryland Health Act of 2024 so that other women can receive the necessary support early on - the support that for many women unfortunately comes much too late. Currently, 1 in 4 women die by suicide because of postpartum depression. It is hard to imagine just how impactful the loss of a mother is to her family and greater community, especially knowing that these losses are often preventable.

Thank you for your consideration of this essential legislation.

Sincerely,
Amanda McNabb