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HB1051

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To Whom It Concerns:

In 2023, I intimately experienced two instances of women close to me in my life struggle with perinatal mental health disorders.

In February 2023, I received a call from my younger sister asking me to come over immediately and help with her then four-month-old baby. She was having suicidal thoughts and ideations and was absolutely terrified. Luckily, as a teenager she went to therapy and psychiatric services and still had a relationship with those doctors. Between calling her OB and her former psychiatrists she made the decision to go to the Emergency Room and ultimately self-admitted herself to a psychiatric ward for 14 days. Upon leaving the psychiatric ward, our family continued to provide her support by helping with the baby while she completed three weeks of a partial hospitalization program at a local hospital. After, battling through postpartum OCD, anxiety, and depression – and 13 months of treatment, therapy and hard work my sister is finally on a path to healing. She still has her struggles, but she has the support of her family, doctors and ultimately has learned through her own very hard work how to live her life alongside her diagnosis.

My sister has worked incredibly hard on her healing journey; however, she is also incredibly lucky to have family close to help with her baby and funds to pay for her very expensive therapy and medications. I believe my family to be the exception. Not all women have access to family, friends and ultimately money to pay the exceptionally high cost of therapy and psychiatric services.

In December of 2023, my childhood best friend, **Andrea Kolbe**, succumbed to her intense struggle with postpartum depression and psychosis and died of suicide. She tried to get help, she went to the hospital, was prescribed an anti-depressant – however she was turned loose by the healthcare system. She was not given any follow up with a psychiatrist or therapist. The system failed her, she fell through the cracks. She now leaves a loving family, husband and 6-month-old baby to grow up without his mother.

HB1051 is an important and necessary bill to support in the state of Maryland. There is simply not enough support for women during and after pregnancy. The resources are limited, hard to find and extraordinarily expensive. A woman struggling with her mental health on top of the immense load of being a new mother is too much for anyone to handle. What happened to my dear friend was avoidable – she could have been saved. Simply put, we MUST do better for women.

Signed in support of HB1051,



Katherine J. Reid