



February 27, 2026

**Senate Finance Committee
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

SB 891 - Health, Health Insurance, and Health Occupations - Perinatal Mental Health Conditions

Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB) is a nonprofit organization that serves as the local behavioral health authority (LBHA) for Baltimore City. BHSB works to increase access to a full range of quality behavioral health (mental health and substance use) services and advocates for innovative approaches to prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery for individuals, families, and communities. Baltimore City represents nearly 35 percent of the public behavioral health system in Maryland, serving over 100,000 people with mental illness and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as “behavioral health”) annually.

BHSB strongly supports SB 891 - Health, Health Insurance, and Health Occupations - Perinatal Mental Health Conditions. This bill implements many improvements in perinatal mental health care. The bill includes some of the most impactful recommendations from the Task Force to Study Maternal Mental Health 2016 Report and will advance a comprehensive approach to supporting good mental health during and after pregnancy.¹

Perinatal mental health is an incredibly important component of a healthy pregnancy. Maternal mental health conditions are the most common complication of pregnancy and birth, affecting 1 in 5 mothers and 800,000 families each year. Mental health conditions are a leading cause of maternal mortality, accounting for 22% of pregnancy-related deaths, and yet most women impacted by perinatal conditions remain untreated.² In Baltimore City, perinatal health and mental health face even more serious challenges with high infant mortality and a lack of resources.³

These concerns are long-standing, but the state has left many recommendations from reports and work groups unimplemented. SB 891 aims to rectify this through a comprehensive set of initiatives designed to increase access to perinatal mental health services, mandate and fund frequent screenings, and strengthen health professional perinatal mental health education. These initiatives will not only increase mental health treatment but also will help to improve parent-child connections and reduce stigma related to perinatal mental health. Disparities in access and screening are especially stark in Baltimore, so these initiatives will make even more of a difference to those communities.

Perinatal mental health is an essential aspect to overall health during and after pregnancy. Maryland should do everything it can to support perinatal mental health and SB 891 implements many strategies to do so. **BHSB urges the Senate Finance Committee to support SB 891.**

For more information, please contact BHSB Policy Director Dan Rabbitt at 443-401-6142

Endnotes:

¹ Task Force to Study Maternal Mental Health 2016 Report Available at:

<https://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc5300/sc5339/000113/021600/021622/20170014e.pdf>

² Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance. Maternal Mental Health Overview: August 2025. Available at:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/637b72cb2e3c555fa412eaf0/t/68a45ac0be50d4791f30a5bd/1755601600598/Maternal+Mental+Health+Overview+Fact+Sheet+-+August+2025.pdf>

³ Bmore for Healthy Babies: Data and Research. Available at <https://www.healthybabiesbaltimore.com/data-and-research>