



February 27, 2026

COMMITTEE: Senate Finance Committee

BILL: SB 891 – Health, Health Insurance and Health Occupations – Perinatal Mental Health Conditions

POSITION: Support

The Horizon Foundation is the largest independent health philanthropy in Maryland. We are committed to a Howard County free from systemic inequities, where all people can live abundant and healthy lives. The Foundation is pleased to **support SB 891 – Health, Health Insurance and Health Occupations – Perinatal Mental Health Conditions**. This bill would require health insurers to provide coverage for screening for perinatal mental health conditions, including postpartum depression, during pregnancy, and up to one year after giving birth. It also requires the Maryland Department of Health to develop a perinatal mental health screening program and establish continuing education requirements for certain health care professionals related to perinatal mental health conditions.

Much work remains to solve the maternal health crisis we are experiencing in the United States, particularly for mothers of color. Nationally, Black women are three times more likely to die from a pregnancy-related cause than White women.ⁱ In addition, more than 80% of pregnancy-related deaths are preventable.ⁱⁱ Here in Maryland, Black mothers are more likely than White mothers to have a preterm birth, and more than twice as likely to have their babies experience low birth weight or infant mortality.ⁱⁱⁱ Nationally, Black and Asian or Pacific Islander Americans are significantly more likely to report symptoms of pregnancy-related depression than their White counterparts. Research also shows that perinatal mental health conditions are a leading underlying cause of pregnancy-related deaths and can cause other chronic health issues. Infants of mothers with depression are also more likely to be hospitalized and die within the first year of life.^{iv}

For the last several years, the Horizon Foundation has advocated for policies and programs that would implement a full continuum of reproductive health services in our community and in our state. We have also been working with several nonprofit organizations, funders and clinical providers to examine solutions to improve maternal and child health. SB 891 represents an important part of the solution to tackling the maternal health crisis for women of color and would help ensure that the needs of all women and birthing people before, during and after pregnancy are being met. Improving access to mental health care and developing a more robust

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screening system for perinatal mental health conditions will also help ensure that all of Maryland's children can be given the healthy start they deserve.

We strongly believe everyone should have access to high quality, respectful health and mental health care before, during and after pregnancy. For this reason, the Foundation **SUPPORTS SB 891** and urges a **FAVORABLE** report. Thank you for your consideration.

ⁱ The Network for Public Health Law, 2023.

ⁱⁱ <https://www.cdc.gov/womens-health/features/maternal-mortality.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ Kaiser Family Foundation: <https://www.kff.org/interactive/womens-health-profiles/maryland/maternal-infant-health/>

^{iv} Kaiser Family Foundation: <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/racial-disparities-in-maternal-and-infant-health-current-status-and-key-issues/>