

February 25, 2025

Dear Members of the Finance Committee,

I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 891, Health, Health Insurance, and Health Occupations - Perinatal Mental Health Conditions. I am a resident of District 8 and have experienced first-hand Maryland's avoidable gaps in screening for postpartum depression.

While screening tools for postpartum depression exist, they don't make a difference if mothers don't receive them, if providers don't review them, and if those needing help aren't referred to services. My own experience demonstrates that we need additional focus on high-quality screening:

- At my 6-week postpartum visit, I completed the standard Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale honestly. At that point, I had near-constant anxiety, low emotions, and believed that things would never get better. The nurse took a cursory glance at my completed form, said "New baby blues?", and moved on with the appointment. I was left doubting my own feelings. This happened at a federally qualified health center in Baltimore City.
- I completed the Postnatal Depression Scale at each one of my child's pediatrician appointments. After turning in the form, it was never discussed with me at any appointment. I still don't know if it was even reviewed by the pediatrician or simply filed away in a drawer. This happened at a popular pediatrician office with multiple locations in Baltimore County and Harford County.

Each of these instances was a missed opportunity to be diagnosed with postpartum depression. I continued to experience anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts for several months until a provider went out of her way to talk with me and make a referral. If there had been a stronger emphasis on postpartum screening, review, and referral at these offices, I may have received help sooner.

I am particularly encouraged that SB 891 would require the Maryland Department of Health to establish a perinatal mental health condition screening program. We need a dedicated, expert-led, and statewide effort to make sustained changes for mothers and their families.

For these reasons, I urge a favorable report on SB 891. Thank you for your time and service.

Sincerely,

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