

Hearing 3/13 at 1:00 p.m.

House Health Committee

Health, Health Insurance, and Health Occupations – Perinatal Mental Health Conditions (HB1118)

Position: Favorable

Good Afternoon, Chair Bagnall and members of the House Health Committee,

My name is Kyra Vocci. I am here today as a maternal mental health advocate, as the founder of Andrea's Wish Foundation, and as a representative of Postpartum Support International – Maryland Chapter. We are in strong support of HB1118.

I am also here because of my sister, Andrea.

Andrea gave birth to her beautiful son, Harbor, on August 24, 2023, and like so many mothers, she struggled silently in the months that followed. She loved her baby deeply. She wanted to be well. But she fell through the cracks of a healthcare system that screens without always ensuring connection to care. She was identified as struggling, but there was no clear, urgent pathway. No coordinated follow-up. No rapid response. Three months after giving birth, Andrea died by suicide – one day after her 35th birthday on December 11, 2023.

Our family lives every day with the reality that her death may have been preventable if there had been stronger systems in place, if a positive screen had triggered immediate action, clear referrals, and real follow-up. Postpartum Depression and Psychosis are treatable. That is why this bill matters so deeply to me.

Expanding screening, strengthening insurance coverage, and requiring provider education are critical and long overdue. But I urge you to ensure that screening does not become a checkbox. When a mother screens positive, that moment must trigger action.

We need a standardized care activation process, and a required response protocol, so providers know exactly what to do next. Referrals must happen quickly. Access to trained specialists must be timely. Care coordination and follow-up must be built into the process, so families are not left to navigate it alone.

Because when a mother finally says - I'm not okay - delays can be dangerous. In the postpartum period, weeks matter. Sometimes days matter. Andrea's story is not rare, and that is exactly the problem. I cannot change what happened to my sister. But together, we can change what happens next for Maryland mothers.

On behalf of Postpartum Support International – Maryland Chapter, and in honor of Andrea and her son Harbor. I am asking you, from the deepest place in my heart, to strengthen this bill so that another family is spared the pain, of a preventable tragedy that mine carries every single day.

Thank you for your time and your leadership.

With heartfelt appreciation,

Kyra Vocci

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