



HB 1118

**Health, Health Insurance, and Health Occupations - Perinatal Mental Health Conditions
WRITTEN TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE HEALTH COMMITTEE
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For the Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO)**

Position: Support – Date: March 13, 2026

The Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO) is in strong support of HB 1118. This bill, with its sponsor amendments to include sequential screening and referral for substance misuse during pregnancy, has the potential to greatly improve the health of women and their children and reduce Maryland’s maternal mortality rate. As Committee members are aware, the United States has the highest maternal mortality rate of any economically developed country in the world.¹

According to the 2025 Maryland Maternal Health Innovation Report, 40% of women with severe pregnancy or postpartum complications had underlying mental health and/or substance use conditions.² This is more than any other contributing factor, including obesity and hypertension. In Maryland, behavioral health disorders are by far the leading cause of maternal deaths.³ In addition, mental health and substance use disorders are leading drivers of Maryland children being placed in foster care.⁴

Pregnancy and the postpartum period can change both the intensity of mental health and substance use disorders and the pace at which life-threatening problems can develop. HB 1118 addresses this by requiring serial screening during the pregnancy and through the end of the first postpartum year. As a result, mental health and substance use disorders will be diagnosed and treated at an earlier stage with resulting improvements in perinatal well-being.

Extending screening until one year after the completion of a pregnancy aligns the bill with the definition of pregnancy-related morbidity and mortality used by both the CDC and the Maryland Department of Health. Including pregnancies that do not result in the birth of a living child also recognizes the emotional toll of miscarriages and stillbirths in the setting of physiological changes brought on by pregnancy.

MACHO would like to thank Del. White Holland for working with an array of stakeholders to craft this bill into legislation that has the potential to greatly improve the health and safety of pregnant and postpartum women and their children. For these reasons, the Maryland Association of County Health Officers submits written testimony in strong support of HB 1118. For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, MACHO Executive Director at rmaiora1@jhu.edu or 410-937-1433. *This communication reflects the position of MACHO.*

1 <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2024/jun/insights-us-maternal-mortality-crisis-international-comparison>

2 https://mdmom.org/sites/default/files/documents/2025_SMM%20Program%20Findings.pdf

3 <https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/mch/Documents/MMR/2022%20MMR%20Report.pdf>

4 https://health.maryland.gov/bha/documents/publications/hb7_adaa_finalreport.pdf