

Testimony Concerning HB 1118

“Health, Health Insurance, and Health Occupations – Perinatal Mental Health Conditions”

Submitted to the House Health Committee

March 13, 2026

Position: SUPPORT

B 'More for Healthy Babies (BHB) in community partnership with MedStar Harbor Hospital, strongly supports HB 1118 “Health, Health Insurance, and Health Occupations – Perinatal Mental Health Conditions.” This bill requires screenings for perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (PMADs) by health providers at prenatal appointments and the post-partum visit, as well as at each of the 7 well-child visits during a child’s first year of life. For a baby to be well supported and healthy, their parents need to be healthy, especially in terms of their mental health. HB 1118 will ensure that parents suffering from PMADs can get the support they need.

BHB is an innovative initiative to reduce infant mortality in Baltimore City through programs emphasizing policy change, service improvements, community mobilization, and behavior change. It has helped reduce the infant mortality rate in Baltimore City to its lowest point ever: 9.7 deaths per 1,000 live births (2012). Infant mortality has decreased by 28% since the launch of the initiative, from 13.5 in 2009 to 9.7 in 2012; the disparity between white and black infant deaths decreased by almost 40% during the same time period.

BHB is led by the Baltimore City Health Department with The Family League of Baltimore and HealthCare Access Maryland as lead partners. MedStar Health Harbor Hospital, in collaboration with BHB, has expanded this initiative to the Cherry Hill and South Baltimore communities to provide additional community outreach and support to birthing families.

Perinatal mental health disorders can have serious adverse effects on the health and functioning of the mother, her infant, and her family.

- 20% of women experience a perinatal mental health condition
- 75% of these women never receive treatment

- Perinatal mental health conditions are the leading cause of maternal death (22%)
- Maternal mental health conditions can disrupt the development of parent-child relationships
- Maternal mental health conditions can cause behavioral, cognitive, and emotional delays in a child

HB 1118 would:

- Implement the most impactful recommendations of the Task Force to Study Maternal Mental Health, which was established by the General Assembly in 2015
- Bring Maryland into line with other states that have passed legislation similar to HB 1118, including Minnesota, California, West Virginia, Virginia, and New York
- Achieve some of the goals outlined in a 2025 Maryland Maternal Health Improvement Plan, including improving the screening, diagnosis, and treatment of behavioral health conditions in perinatal women, and better training the perinatal workforce to support women's behavioral health

Maryland lags behind other states in perinatal mental health care:

- Every year, the Policy Center for Maternal Mental Health develops state report cards. While overall the 2025 report card gave Maryland a "C," largely because of its Medicaid expansion, it gave Maryland an "F" for gaps in prenatal and postpartum screening rates and accountability.

HB 1118 would improve the overall health and well-being of women and children, and it would mark a critical step in the development of a comprehensive and robust perinatal mental health system of care in Maryland. We respectfully request that this committee issue a favorable report on HB 1118 to ensure that Maryland's parents have all the support they need to care for their babies.