

# inseparable

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Washington, D.C. 20004

March 13, 2026

Health Committee

240 Taylor House Office Building

Annapolis, MD 21401

Via electronic submission

RE: SUPPORT FOR HB 1118 (Perinatal Mental Health Conditions)

Dear Chair Bagnall, Vice-Chair Cullison, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Inseparable, a national mental health advocacy organization focused on closing the treatment gap for people with mental health conditions and substance use disorders, I'm pleased to submit testimony in **support of HB 1118**. This bill will strengthen mental health support for perinatal and postpartum mothers.

The perinatal and postpartum period is one of the most important windows in the life of both a parent and a child and is a critical time for parent-child bonding, attachment, and healthy brain development. When a mother is struggling with a mental health condition, including depression or anxiety, it can profoundly affect that bonding process.

Maternal mental health conditions are common, with nearly 1 in 5 mothers experiencing a mental health condition during pregnancy or in the first year after birth. Untreated mental health conditions during this period are associated with preterm birth, challenges with breastfeeding, disrupted attachment, and can have long-term impacts on a child's social and emotional development. Conversely, when new moms are supported, good mental health is associated with healthier pregnancies and birth outcomes, more responsive and nurturing caregiving, secure attachment, and improved cognitive, social, and emotional development for the child that can extend later into childhood.

HB 1118 takes proactive steps to strengthen support for expectant and postpartum mothers. The intent of the bill is to expand coverage for mental health screenings during the perinatal and postpartum periods. Expanding screening during routine visits helps normalize mental health as part of overall health. It is about reducing stigma, making conversations routine, and ensuring mothers are supported when they need mental healthcare.

Screening for maternal mental health is an important first step, but meaningful connection to care is the true goal, and HB 1118 helps make that connection possible. By identifying and addressing mental health needs, we strengthen parent-child attachment, support healthy

development, and help families access the right support before challenges become more serious or costly.

HB 1118 reflects thoughtful expansion of screening and support during a critical time in a mother's life. Thank you for your consideration and I respectfully urge a favorable report.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Gibson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

Marianne Gibson

Vice President, Youth, Crisis & Workforce Policy