

August 22, 2024

The Honorable Jack Reed  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Armed Services  
Russell Senate Building, Room 228  
Washington, D.C., 20510

The Honorable Roger Wicker  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Armed Services  
Russell Senate Building, Room 228  
Washington, D.C., 20510

The Honorable Mike Rogers  
Chairman  
House Committee on Armed Services  
2216 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C., 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Armed Services  
2216 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, Chairman Rogers, and Ranking Member Smith

We, the 120 undersigned organizations who represent and care for the health and wellness of mothers, babies, and families, respectfully request that the final National Defense Authorization Act language includes the “Pilot program to prevent perinatal mental health conditions in pregnant and postpartum members of the Armed Forces and covered beneficiaries“ of H.R. 8070, the “Servicemember Quality of Life Improvement and National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025” (NDAA) within the final version of the FY 2025 NDAA. (Sec. 709 of the House-passed FY25 NDAA).

This provision is based on the bipartisan Moms Act (S. 3641/H.R. 7087) led by Sen. Shaheen (D-NH), Sen. Fischer (R-NE), Rep. Houlahan (D-PA), and Rep. Bacon (R-NE), which pilots evidence-based maternal mental health prevention programs at Military Treatment Facilities to support members of the Armed Forces and their families. These programs have been proven to prevent maternal mental health (MMH) conditions and lessen the severity of symptoms, which is essential to improve the health and readiness of pregnant members of the Armed Forces who are disproportionately impacted by MMH conditions

MMH conditions are the most common complication of pregnancy and childbirth, and the leading cause of maternal mortality in the United States, with suicide and overdose accounting for over 22% of all pregnancy-related deaths.<sup>1</sup> Despite the high rates of MMH conditions, the majority (75%) of women impacted will not receive treatment, increasing the risk of long-term

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<sup>1</sup> Trost, Susanna, Jennifer Beaugard, Gyan Chandra, Fanny Njie, Jasmine Berry, Alyssa Harvey, and David A. Goodman. *Pregnancy-Related Deaths: Data from Maternal Mortality Review Committees in 36 States, 2017 - 2019*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, US Department of Health and Human Services. 2022.  
<https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternal-mortality/erase-mm/data-mmrc.html>

negative impacts to mother, baby, family, and society.<sup>2</sup> The cost of not treating these conditions is significant, amounting to \$14 billion each year.<sup>3</sup>

Service members and their dependents are at increased risk of developing MMH conditions due to unique challenges that come with military service, including the effects of deployment and limited social support. While one in five civilians will develop a MMH condition during pregnancy or in the postpartum period, one in three service members will develop a MMH condition. A May 2022 report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO-22-105136), *Prevalence of and Efforts to Screen and Treat Mental Health Conditions in Prenatal and Postpartum TRICARE Beneficiaries*, found that 36% of beneficiaries (active duty, reservists, retirees, and dependents) had a mental health condition in the perinatal period, almost double the national average. Beneficiaries cited barriers in accessing care to address MMH conditions, including stigma, lack of provider availability, and privacy concerns that a diagnosis may affect career advancement.<sup>4</sup>

Sec. 709 included within the House-passed FY 2025 NDAA would fulfill the suggestions from the 2022 GAO report and align with the Committees' work to improve the quality of life for our nation's service members and their families. Access to programs to prevent MMH conditions and support women during pregnancy and postpartum will support force readiness and retention but will also help save lives and help families thrive.

If the committee has any questions about this letter, please contact Jamie Belsito, Director of Policy, Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance at [jbelsito@mmhla.org](mailto:jbelsito@mmhla.org)

Sincerely,

Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance  
Abrazo Health  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American College of Nurse-Midwives  
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
American Psychiatric Association  
Anchor Perinatal Wellness  
Angela Frazee Counseling LLC  
Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago  
Anna Dell Doula  
Anxiety and Depression Association of America  
Ascension St Vincent Carmel Hospital

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<sup>2</sup> Metz Torri D, Polina Rovner, M Camille Hoffman, Amanda A Allshouse, Krista M Beckwith, and Ingrid A Binswanger. *Maternal Deaths From Suicide and Overdose in Colorado, 2004-2012*. *Obstet Gynecol*. 2016;128(6):1233-1240.

<sup>3</sup> Luca, Dara Lee, Nellie Garlow, Colleen Staatz, Caroline Margiotta, and Kara Zivin. *Societal Costs of Untreated Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders in the United States*. Mathematica Policy Research. April 29, 2019.  
<https://www.mathematica.org/publications/societal-costs-of-untreated-perinatal-mood-and-anxiety-disorders-in-the-united-states>

<sup>4</sup> Government Accountability Office. *Defense Health Care: Prevalence of and Efforts to Screen and Treat Mental Health Conditions in Prenatal and Postpartum TRICARE Beneficiaries*. May 23, 2022. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-22-105136>

Association for Physician Associates in Obstetrics and Gynecology  
At Ease Counseling  
BAYA Corporation  
Baylor College of Medicine  
Bert Nash CMHC  
Beyond the Baby Blues  
Brandeis University  
Building Military Families Network  
BWMH  
California Chapter of Postpartum Support International  
California Council of Community Behavioral Health Agencies  
California State University, Northridge  
Central Carolina Doulas  
Childbirth and Postpartum Professional Association  
Chorus Community Health Plan  
Columbia University Medical Center  
Cradle Cincinnati/Queens Village  
Cultivate Counseling  
Employees Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA)  
Family Road of Greater Baton Rouge Healthy Start  
Feed Your Mental  
Flourish Wellness Collective  
Fran and Earl Ziegler College of Nursing, OUHS  
George Washington University  
Georgia State University  
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice  
Global Military Lactation Community  
Grow Therapy  
HealthyWomen  
Heat and Hands Midwifery and Family Healthcare  
Honey Postpartum  
Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services  
Iowa ACEs 360  
Jamaica Hospital  
Kai Reproductive Counseling  
Kyla Care Therapy  
Lifeline for Families Center and the Lifeline for Moms Program at UMass Chan Medical School  
Mamaya Health  
Mammha  
Mandala Therapy

Marce of North America  
March for Moms  
March of Dimes  
Maternal Care Institute  
McNeley-Phelps Psychological Services  
Mental Health America of Ohio  
Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute  
Milena Hruby Smith MD, PhD, LLC  
Mission: Motherhood  
Moms Mental Health Initiative, Inc.  
MomsRising  
Montclair State University  
National Alliance on Mental Illness  
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health  
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners  
National Military Family Association  
Nemours Children's Health  
North Carolina Child  
North Carolina Partnership for Children  
Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services  
Oppenheim Consulting  
Parent & Family Wellness Center  
PMHA-POC|PSI  
Policy Center for Maternal Mental Health  
Postpartum Health Los Angeles  
Postpartum International - NC  
Postpartum Resource Center of New York  
Postpartum Support International  
Postpartum Support International - AZ Chapter  
Postpartum Support International California  
Postpartum Support International- Military Families  
Postpartum Support VA  
PSI California Chapter  
PSI Maine  
Rebekah N. Jensen LCSW LLC  
Repro Psych Trainees  
Reproductive Mental Health Consultants  
Return to Zero: HOPE  
Rula  
Sacramento Maternal Mental Health Collaborative

Seven Starling  
SHIELDS for Families  
Summit Healthcare  
The Center for Postpartum Health  
The Colette Louise Tisdahl Foundation  
The Family Place  
The HIVE Maternal Wellness Center  
The Postpartum Adjustment Center  
The Postpartum Resource Center of New York, Inc.  
Tibi Health  
Transition to Parenthood  
Trayt Health  
Trending Joy Counseling & Therapy, PLLC  
Turning Point Windham County  
UMass Chan Medical School  
UNC BlueRidge  
University of California San Diego  
University of Kansas  
University of Virginia  
USAF United States Air Force  
VA Center for Integrated Healthcare/University of Rochester Medical Center  
Valentine Psychiatry PLLC  
Weill Cornell Medicine  
Wellbeing for Women  
What to Expect Project  
Whole Heart Reproductive Mental Health  
WV Perinatal Partnership, Inc.  
Yale University