

April 10, 2019

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education & Related Agencies  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education & Related Agencies  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As organizations that care deeply about the health and well-being of our nation's women and children, we write to thank you for allocating \$5 million for Screening and Treatment for Maternal Depression and \$10 million in funding for the Pediatric Mental Health Care Access Program in Fiscal Year (FY) 2019. As you begin work on the FY 2020 appropriations process, we respectfully request that the FY 2020 Labor, HHS, Education (LHHS) appropriations bill includes level funding for these important initiatives.

Maternal mental health disorders, commonly called postpartum depression (PPD), affect one in five families, making it one of the most common medical complications during pregnancy and the postpartum period. PPD is the most common complication of pregnancy, and maternal suicide exceeds hemorrhage and hypertensive disorders as a leading cause of maternal mortality. Unidentified and untreated, maternal depression can have devastating effects on women, infants, and families.

The Screening and Treatment for Maternal Depression program increases access to screening and treatment for PPD by providing additional resources to states to develop and implement programs tailored to the needs of women and families. By expanding health care providers' capacity to screen, assess, treat, and refer pregnant and postpartum women for maternal depression, this targeted program allows women and families to access culturally sensitive and competent care targeted to the unique needs of their community. Maintaining these funds will allow the program to continue to build on the success of local programs, and have substantial impact on the women, children and families, struggling with maternal depression.

Research shows pervasive shortages of child and adolescent mental/behavioral health specialists throughout the US. To reduce this severe access barrier, integrating mental health and primary care has been shown to substantially expand access to mental health care, improve health and functional outcomes, increase satisfaction with care, and achieve cost savings. Expanding the capacity of pediatric primary care providers to deliver behavioral health through mental and behavioral health consultation programs is one way to maximize a limited subspecialty workforce and to help ensure more children with emerging or diagnosed mental health disorders receive early and continuous treatment. The human and economic toll of inadequately addressing childhood mental health problems is significant. Untreated mental health disorders lead to higher rates of family dysfunction, poor school performance and drop-outs, juvenile incarceration, substance use, unemployment, and suicide. In 2016, more than 5,000 young people between the ages of 10 and 24 died by suicide, making it the second leading cause of death in this age group.

Funding for the Pediatric Mental Health Care Access Program will maintain and expand access to behavioral health services in pediatric primary care settings by supporting the development and maintenance of pediatric mental health care telehealth access programs. Funding from HRSA currently supports 18 state pediatric mental health care access programs across the country with more likely to be funded soon. These programs support primary care providers in terms of continuing education, specialty mental health referral and behavioral health resource networking, social work co-location, and phone consultation.

As you prepare the FY 2020 LHHS appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you continue to fund these critical programs with level funding. Thank you for your consideration. Our organizations are grateful to you for your commitment to the mental health and well-being of our nation's families.

Sincerely,

**National Organizations**

AIDS Alliance for Women, Infants, Children, Youth & Families  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work  
American Association of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry  
American College of Nurse-Midwives  
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychological Association  
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs  
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses (AWHONN)  
Children's Hospital Association  
College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists (CPNP)  
Community Catalyst  
Expecting Health at Genetic Alliance  
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice  
March of Dimes  
Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance  
Mental Health America  
MomsRising  
NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness)  
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health  
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners  
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors  
National Hispanic Medical Association  
Nurse-Family Partnership  
School Social Work Association of America  
School-Based Health Alliance  
Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine  
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine  
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health  
United Way Worldwide  
ZERO TO THREE

**State and Local Organizations**

American Academy of Pediatrics New York 1 Chapter  
American Academy of Pediatrics, CA Chapter 3  
Children's Hospital of Wisconsin  
Colorado Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Society  
Florida Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics, Inc.  
Illinois Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies  
NH Children's Behavioral Health Collaborative  
Oregon Pediatric Society  
St. Louis Center for Family Development  
Texas Pediatric Society, The Texas Chapter of the AAP  
Virginia American Academy of Pediatrics  
Voices for Virginia's Children  
West Virginia Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics