



The American College of  
Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
WOMEN'S HEALTH CARE PHYSICIANS

March 11, 2022

The Honorable Katherine Clark  
2448 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jaime Herrera Beutler  
2352 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Doris Matsui  
2311 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Michael C. Burgess, MD  
2161 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Yvette Clarke  
2058 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Young Kim  
1306 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Clark, Herrera Beutler, Matsui, Burgess, Clarke, and Kim:

On behalf of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), representing more than 62,000 physicians and partners dedicated to advancing women's health, thank you for introducing the *Into the Light for Maternal Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders Act*. ACOG is proud to endorse this bipartisan legislation that builds on the success of the program authorized in the 2016 *Bringing Postpartum Depression Out of the Shadows Act*.

Maternal mental health conditions are one of the most common complications during pregnancy and the postpartum period.<sup>i</sup> Racial inequities persist, with Black birthing people experiencing a higher prevalence of maternal mental health conditions and increased barriers to treatment access.<sup>ii,iii</sup> Tragically, overdose and suicide are leading causes of pregnancy-associated death in the United States, and data has shown that risks of adverse maternal health outcomes – including mortality – from maternal mental health conditions and substance use disorders may increase in the later postpartum period.<sup>iv,v</sup> Data continues to emerge confirming that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the maternal mortality crisis, and had a particularly negative impact on maternal mental health.<sup>vi</sup>

ACOG recommends universal screening for maternal mental health conditions and substance use disorders during the perinatal period.<sup>vii,viii</sup> However, barriers remain to accessing needed treatment. The bipartisan *Into the Light Act* would support increased screening and improved access to treatment, with a particular focus on areas with a shortage of clinicians and high rates of adverse and inequitable maternal health outcomes. It would also authorize the national Maternal Mental Health Hotline to provide emotional support, information, brief intervention, and resources to pregnant and postpartum individuals.

Thank you again for your leadership in introducing the *Into the Light Act*. ACOG looks forward to working with you toward enactment of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

J. Martin Tucker, MD, FACOG  
President  
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

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- <sup>i</sup> Screening for perinatal depression. ACOG Committee Opinion No. 757. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. *Obstet Gynecol* 2018;132:e208–12.
- <sup>ii</sup> Howell EA, Mora PA, Horowitz CR, Leventhal H. Racial and ethnic differences in factors associated with early postpartum depressive symptoms. *Obstet Gynecol*. 2005 Jun;105(6):1442-50. doi: 10.1097/01.AOG.0000164050.34126.37. PMID: 15932842; PMCID: PMC4302723.
- <sup>iii</sup> Iturralde, E., Hsiao, C.A., Nkemere, L. et al. Engagement in perinatal depression treatment: a qualitative study of barriers across and within racial/ethnic groups. *BMC Pregnancy Childbirth* 21, 512 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12884-021-03969-1>.
- <sup>iv</sup> Building U.S. Capacity to Review and Prevent Maternal Deaths. (2018). Report from nine maternal mortality review committees. Retrieved from [https://reviewtoaction.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/Report%20from%20Nine%20MMRCs%20final\\_0.pdf](https://reviewtoaction.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/Report%20from%20Nine%20MMRCs%20final_0.pdf).
- <sup>v</sup> Schiff DM, Nielsen T, Terplan M, Hood M, Bernson D, Diop H, Bharel M, Wilens TE, LaRochelle M, Walley AY, Land T. Fatal and Nonfatal Overdose Among Pregnant and Postpartum Women in Massachusetts. *Obstet Gynecol*. 2018 Aug;132(2):466-474. doi: 10.1097/AOG.0000000000002734. PMID: 29995730; PMCID: PMC6060005.
- <sup>vi</sup> Kotlar B, Gerson E, Petrillo S, Langer A, Tiemeier H. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on maternal and perinatal health: a scoping review. *Reprod Health*. 2021;18(1):10. Published 2021 Jan 18. doi:10.1186/s12978-021-01070-6.
- <sup>vii</sup> Screening for perinatal depression. ACOG Committee Opinion No. 757. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. *Obstet Gynecol* 2018;132:e208–12.
- <sup>viii</sup> Opioid use and opioid use disorder in pregnancy. Committee Opinion No. 711. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. *Obstet Gynecol* 2017;130:e81–94.