



MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT

S.6715/A9385

An ACT to amend the public health law, in relation to maternal depression treatment.

The Postpartum Resource Center of New York, Inc. supports this bill which would ensure adequate investment in treatment resources for maternal depression including a statewide hotline, peer support, adequate referral networks and telehealth or telemedicine services.

Nearly 235,300 women delivered a baby in New York State in 2013 (New York State Department of Health, 2015). Of these, an estimated 10% - 20% experienced perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (PMAD-Maternal Depression) (Moses-Kolko & Roth, 2004; O'Hara & Swain, 1996; Stuart et al., 1998) – approximately 23,530 – 47,060 women in New York State experienced Maternal Depression. Moreover, children of mothers with Maternal Depression are more likely to experience mental health concerns, learning disabilities, cognitive impairment, conduct/behavioral issues, and/or developmental delays (Canadian Paediatric Society, 2004). Clearly, this issue concerns not just moms, but the entire family, and as a result, entire communities.

Research indicates Maternal Depression care is a complex issue involving minimal medical and mental health provider education while in school, resulting in minimal resources in the community for assistance. Although the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommend screening once during pregnancy, should Maternal Depression be indicated, physicians need to provide referral and resources for medical or mental health assistance (Committee on Obstetric Practice, 2015). Due to these factors, some are reluctant to educate, screen, refer or treat, despite efforts by New York State Maternal Depression law changes. Additionally, mothers are reluctant to discuss changes in mental health due to shame, fear that her child will be removed from her care, and distressing interactions with professionals (Zittel-Palamara et al, 2009). Although there are several psychological and ancillary professional treatments available, the most common treatment remains medication – one that some mothers refuse due to nursing concerns and stigma (Holopainen, 2002; Wood & Meigan, 1997). The unease of professionals combined with the unease of mothers/families to address mental health changes leaves the entire family and community at risk for needless suffering and, at times, deadly consequences.

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109 Udall Road, West Islip, NY 11795 – postpartumNY.org
office 631-422-2255 fax 631-661-8591 – State-wide Helpline 855-631-0001

This is why the Postpartum Resource Center of New York supports this essential bill S.6715/A9385 in addressing the serious public health concern of Maternal Depression and urges its enactment.

May 3, 2016

The Postpartum Resource Center of New York, Inc. is the non profit 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to increase awareness and access to care for New York State families at risk or experiencing a perinatal mood and anxiety disorder. Since 1998, we have been empowering parents and communities to improve the lives of families by addressing maternal depression and parenting with psychiatric disabilities. We provide a state-wide, toll-free bilingual Helpline; Moms on Call and Family Telephone Support; www.postpartumny.org with a state-wide Perinatal Mood Disorders Resource Directory, Perinatal Mood Disorders Prevention Program: Am I At Risk? Now What?; and the Postpartum Resource Center of New York's Training Institute where we provide training on screening, education and replication of our Circle of Caring Support Group program.

With Project 62 – Our Visioning project of building and strengthening Perinatal Mental Wellness Parent Support Networks and Safety Net in all 62 New York State counties, we seek to save lives, build healthy families and vibrant communities.