



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

## Maternal Depression Bill Passes Senate Health Committee

LIZ KRUEGER May 4, 2016

| ISSUE: **MATERNAL DEPRESSION**

**Albany** – Today the State Senate Health Committee voted unanimously in support of S6715, sponsored by Senator Liz Krueger, which would improve treatment options for women diagnosed with maternal depression. The bill, which is sponsored in the Assembly by Assembly Member Diana C. Richardson (A9385), will now go to the Senate Finance Committee.

"Today is a good day for New York's moms, babies, and families -- we're one step closer to making sure they get the support and treatment they need to overcome maternal depression," said Senator Krueger. "I thank my colleagues for their vote today, and I hope the Finance Committee will quickly take up this vital bill. There's no reason any woman should continue to suffer when successful, proven treatment is available."

S6715/A9385 would require the creation of a centralized list of available community resources, peer support groups, and providers who treat maternal depression, which would help providers conducting screenings make appropriate referrals and get more women access to treatment. The bill also requires the state to invest in maternal depression treatment resources including strengthening and expanding a statewide hotline, encouraging peer support and telemedicine options, and improving the capacity of referral

networks.

"It is time that we break the stigma against mothers who suffer from maternal depression, and help them realize that they are not alone. With this bill, we are closer to providing the support needed for the thousands of new moms who struggle with this issue," said Assemblywoman Richardson. "We must continue to push for legislation to help remove barriers and provide the tools needed to screen and treat this condition most effectively "

The legislation builds on guidelines recently issued by the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF), which recommend that women should be screened for depression during pregnancy and after giving birth. The recommendation received a "B" rating from the Task Force, meaning that screening for maternal depression must now be covered under the Affordable Care Act. Last week Governor Andrew M. Cuomo announced that the New York State Department of Financial Services (DFS) has issued guidance informing insurers of their responsibility to cover screening for maternal depression under the Affordable Care Act.

In 2014, Senator Krueger and Assembly Member Richard Gottfried sponsored legislation, which passed unanimously in both houses of the Legislature and was signed into law by Governor Cuomo, to provide education and promote screening and treatment-referrals for postpartum depression and other maternal depression disorders in New York State.

"Maternal depression" includes a range of perinatal mood disorders, emotional and psychological reactions a woman may experience during pregnancy or up to a year after childbirth. Symptoms can include feelings of despair or guilt, sadness, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, changes in appetite, and thoughts of suicide or of harming the baby. Maternal depression includes prenatal depression, "baby blues," postpartum anxiety, postpartum depression, and postpartum psychosis. The latter is the most severe of these conditions,

often including hallucinations and delusions, and results in infanticide and suicide rates of four and five percent, respectively.

Maternal depression affects a significant portion of pregnant women and new mothers; in fact, it is one of the most common medical complications women may experience during and after pregnancy. Each year, approximately 10 to 15 percent of new mothers develop postpartum depression, while 50 to 80 percent of new mothers will experience “baby blues.” A small but significant number – about 0.1 to 0.2 percent of new mothers – develop symptoms serious enough to be considered postpartum psychosis.

Maternal depression can lead to significant negative consequences for those affected and their families and children if left untreated. However, treatment for maternal depression has an 80 to 90 percent success rate. Early diagnosis and treatment significantly improve prognoses.

Amy Hines Kramer, Advocacy and Government Affairs Chairperson at March of Dimes New York, said: “Maternal depression can be successfully treated when women have treatment options and peer support. March of Dimes supports maternal depression education, screening and treatment to improve the lives of New York moms, babies and families. Today’s bill will expand education, access to referrals for treatment, resources and support for moms.”

Paige Bellenbaum, maternal depression survivor and activist, said: “Thanks to Senator Liz Krueger, the bar was raised in New York to focus on the very real issue and existence of perinatal mood disorders. Legislation introduced by Senator Krueger and signed into law in 2014 brought screening for perinatal mood disorders to the forefront. Screening is the first step in attempting to ensure that women with perinatal mood disorders are identified, but

the bigger piece of this issue is ensuring that women who suffer - are treated - and helped to feel better. This bill now strives to couple the necessity of screening - with treatment. Women who suffer from perinatal mood disorders cannot afford to have one step without the other."

Leah Kaufman, MD, FACOG, Legislative Chair of the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) District II, said: "Depression in the prenatal and postpartum period can have detrimental effects on women and their families. Unfortunately there is a paucity of resources to effectively treat patients creating gaps in access to care for all women. ACOG District II is dedicated to working with the state to ensure that there is an investment in comprehensive treatment and referral resources, including telehealth options, to improve clinical outcomes for women and families. ACOG thanks the legislative sponsors for their commitment to this issue."

Elie Ward, MSW, Director of Policy & Advocacy for the NYS American Academy of Pediatrics, said: "It is critical that women identified through newly available universal maternal depression screening have access to high quality mental health treatment. Diagnosing maternal depression without providing easy access to high quality mental health services isn't adequate to keep mothers and babies safe during a very dangerous time in their lives. Treatment for maternal depression is treatment to ensure health and resilience for Mom's and their babies!"

Sonia Murdock, Executive Director, Postpartum Resource Center of New York, said: "Thank you to the members of the Senate Health Committee for passing the Maternal Depression bill. With today being World Maternal Mental Health Awareness Day, New York continues to be a leader with assuring New York moms and families will not suffer in silence and get to the help and support they need for recovery."

###

---

## RELATED LEGISLATION

---

### 2015-S6715

---

- Introduced
  
- - In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
  
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
  
- - Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
  
- Delivered to Governor
  
- Signed By Governor
  
- 

[Relates to maternal depression treatment](#)

February 09, 2016

In Assembly Committee

Sponsored by Liz Krueger

Do you support this bill?