



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

Office of the Rhode Island Section Chair
Beth Cronin, MD, FACOG

Testimony Re: HB-7204 An Act Relating to State Affairs and Government – The Healthcare Services Funding Plan Act

May 1, 2024

Dear Representative Abney and Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) in support of **HB-7204**, which would help sustain funding of Psychiatry Resource Network Programs, such as the RI Maternal Psychiatry Resource Network Program, in Rhode Island. I strongly support this bill.

Importance of Addressing Perinatal Mental Health

As a board-certified obstetrician/gynecologist and chair of RI section of ACOG, I have long recognized the importance of addressing the mental health of my pregnant and postpartum patients. Clinical research has clearly shown perinatal depression and other mood disorders, such as bipolar disorder and anxiety disorders, can have devastating effects on mothers, infants, and families if left untreated. One out of every three pregnant individuals (29.4%) experience depression either immediately before, during or after their pregnancy, while 23.7% report substance use in the peri-pregnancy period. National studies have also shown mental health and substance use conditions are often underdiagnosed and engaging with care may be challenging for many. A recent study demonstrated that 44.9% of patients with perinatal depression did not receive any counseling and 70.1% did not take any medication (RI PRAMS study, DOH 2019).

Enhancing Access and Care Thanks to Partnership with the RI MomsPRN Program

In Rhode Island, we are fortunate to have many passionate providers who understand the importance of addressing perinatal behavioral health and who utilize the real-time clinical supports of the Rhode Island Maternal Psychiatry Resource Network (RI MomsPRN) Program to proactively address the mental health needs of their perinatal patients. The ongoing professional education as well as real-time clinical support with diagnosis, treatment planning, medication safety, and resource/referral offered through the RI MomsPRN teleconsultation line are critical for addressing perinatal mental health needs during a time of unprecedented demand.

Support for Sustained Funding of RI MomsPRN Services

It is critically important the General Assembly support statewide services that help improve provider self-efficacy with addressing perinatal mental health and has led to increased patient access to care for those impacted. While our state is fortunate to have localized mental health experts, there are too few and it can be difficult and time-consuming to navigate a complex behavioral health care system considering the increasing demand for services that has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Having access to Psychiatry Resource Network teleconsultation lines such as RI MomsPRN has been a lifeline for busy providers, such as myself, who manage the complex needs of pregnant and postpartum

patients. I urge to you to sustain these critically needed provider supports that help increase access to mental healthcare and vote to support **HB-7204**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'BC', followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Beth Cronin, MD
RI Section Chair, ACOG
Division Director, Division of Academic Specialists in General Obstetrics and Gynecology
Women & Infants Hospital