



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 5461: An Act Relating to State Affairs and Government – The Healthcare Services Funding Plan Act**

April 30, 2025

Dear Chairman Abney & Members of the House Committee on Finance,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) in **support of HB 5461**, 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. More than one in four pregnant women (27.1%) experience depression either immediately before, during or after their pregnancy, while 24.6% 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 45% of patients with perinatal depression did not receive any counseling and 60.4% did not take any medication (RI PRAMS study, RIDOH 2022).


**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 continue to support statewide services that help prenatal care workforce address mental health that 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 and other factors. 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 5461**.

Sincerely,



---

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