

Maryland Signs Perinatal Behavioral Health Coverage Into Law, Marking a Turning Point for Maternal Mental Health

Coalition of maternal health organizations celebrates passage of HB 1118, championed by Delegate Jennifer White Holland and signed by Governor Wes Moore

ANNAPOLIS, MD, MD, UNITED STATES, May 29, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Governor Wes Moore this week signed HB 1118, the Health, Health Insurance, and Health Occupations: Perinatal Behavioral Health Conditions Act, into law. The legislation requires Maryland insurers and the Maryland Medical Assistance Program to cover standardized screenings for perinatal behavioral health conditions during pregnancy and in the first year of a child's life. The Maryland Department of Health is now tasked with identifying evidence-based screening tools and connecting mothers to referral resources following a positive screen.



Gov Moore and Maternal Mental Health Supporters Signing Bill Into Law

Sponsored by Delegate Jennifer White Holland, the law takes effect in two phases. Screening requirements begin July 1, 2026. Insurance coverage provisions follow in January 2027.

Delegate Holland said, "After the passage of the Maryland Maternal Health Act of 2024, I reflected on testimony our committee received from someone who lost their loved one by suicide, three months after giving birth to their baby. Paired with our statewide data and my own recent experience as a new mom, I knew we needed to strengthen our systems of care to better address perinatal mental health. Four months into my own postpartum journey, I brought together advocates, perinatal mental health providers, insurers, health officers, hospitals, state

agencies, doulas, nurses, providers, midwives, and non-profit organizations to advance this bill. This is a critical step and we know there is more work to be done."

The signing marks a significant milestone for maternal mental health advocates, providers, and organizations across Maryland who worked to advance the bill, including [Postpartum Support International Maryland Chapter](#), Andrea's Wish Foundation, [Maryland Families for Safe Birth](#), Azalea Mental Health, and Center for the American Family.

A Win for Maryland Mothers

Perinatal mood and anxiety disorders are among the most common complications of pregnancy and the postpartum period, affecting an estimated 1 in 5 mothers. HB 1118 directly addresses a significant gap by mandating coverage for screenings at prenatal, postpartum, and well-child visits throughout the first year of life, creating more consistent touchpoints for identification and ensuring that a positive screen leads to real referral resources.

Quotes from Maternal Mental Health Advocates

Lauren Thompson, MHS, CLC, PMH-C, Co-Chair of the PSI Maryland Chapter, said: "Parents fall through the cracks at exactly the moment they are most vulnerable. HB 1118 is a critical step toward changing that. Requiring coverage for standardized screenings across the first year of a child's life means more Marylanders can be connected to life saving care. This is what advocacy looks like when it works, and we are proud to have stood alongside a passionate and diverse coalition that made it possible."

Mary Frances LaHood, Founder and Clinical Director of Azalea Mental Health, said: "What we see in our practice is that the women who reach us had to fight to find us. They were not screened, or they were screened and not followed up with. They were told that they were fine when they were not. HB 1118 changes the infrastructure around that moment. Standardized screening with mandatory coverage and required referral resources means more mothers will have a clear path forward when they need one most, and providers will have the funding and roadmap to support them in getting there. Yesterday, moments after signing this bill into law, Governor Moore told us, 'Sincere congratulations. This is a VERY good bill.' We agree, and Azalea is ready to care for the hundreds of women who now will not be left alone."

Kyra Vocci, maternal health advocate and founder of Andrea's Wish Foundation, said: "In honor of my sister Andrea, Senate Bill 891/cross-filed with House Bill 1118 means more to me and my family than words can express. Andrea was deeply loved, and her story is a heartbreaking reminder of why urgent maternal mental health support, awareness, and intervention are so critically needed. My hope is that this bill will help protect Maryland mothers and families, end the silence and stigma surrounding postpartum mental health struggles, and ensure that no other family has to endure the unimaginable tragedy that ours has faced."

For full bill text, visit mgaleg.maryland.gov.

If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, call or text 988.

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