



Wednesday October 21st, 2020

MHSOAC Commissioners
1325 J Street, Suite 1700
Sacramento, CA 95814

To the honorable MHSOAC Commissioners Ashbeck, Madrigal-Weiss, Tamplen, Anthony, Alvarez, Senator Beall, Berrick, Dr. Boyd, Brown, Dr. Bunch, Assemblymember Carrillo, Dr. Danovitch, Gordon, Mitchell, and Wooton:

2020 Mom greatly appreciates you all continuing to consider our advocacy for improving maternal mental health outcomes in California.

COVID-19 has exacerbated the maternal mental health crisis in California and across the world. A recent study shows that rates of clinically significant anxiety and depression have more than doubled - rising to 72% and 41%, respectively - among pregnant and postpartum women during the pandemic¹. The National Library of Medicine issued a report in August 2020 which found "concerningly elevated symptoms of anxiety and depression among pregnant individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic, that may have long-term impacts on their children."²

We know it is imperative that the commission prioritize the maternal mental health of the birthing population in California. The California Surgeon General's Adverse Childhood Experiences Initiative questionnaire (ACEs screening) is comprised of 10 questions, one of them being (prior to your 18th birthday): "Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide?"³ If we can prevent the depression or mental illness of mothers, we will have automatically eliminated one 'ACE' from impacting the development of their child and mitigate the well studied long term effects of growing up with a parent experiencing a mental illness. It is for this reason we believe the commission should prioritize the prevention and early intervention of maternal mental health disorders.

While we understand that PEI funds have traditionally been siloed for those groups where the greatest disparities lie, we would like to point out that mothers exist across all racial and ethnic lines and the birthing population identifies across sexual orientations.

¹ "Moms Are Not OK: COVID-19 and Maternal Mental ... - Frontiers."
<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fgwh.2020.00001/full>.

² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7395614/>

³ <https://www.acesconnection.com/blog/got-your-ace-resilience-scores>

Additionally, we would like to ask that the commission consider taking on maternal mental health as a policy research project. We appreciate the time and consideration of the MHSOAC commission.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signatures of Joy Burkhard and Crystal McAuley. Joy Burkhard's signature is on the left, and Crystal McAuley's signature is on the right.

Joy Burkhard and Crystal McAuley