



Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc.

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Memorandum in Support

S.7865 (Brouk)/A.5076-A (Solages)

AN ACT to amend the public health law, in relation to maternal depression screenings

The Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc. (MHANYS) strongly supports S.7865/A.5076-A, which would require maternal health care providers to offer a maternal depression screening to new mothers when providing prenatal, postnatal, and pediatric care for the mother's child. The intent of the bill is to make maternal depression screenings more available to new mothers at pre and postpartum checkups, and also at the initial pediatric checkups of their new born child. This should help health care professionals better detect and refer patients suffering from maternal depression to appropriate care, improving the mental health and wellbeing of mothers and whole families.

Maternal mental health conditions are the most common complications of pregnancy and childbirth according to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG). These conditions include depression, anxiety, and substance use disorders, and affect 1 in 5 women. Left undetected and untreated, these illnesses can have long-term negative impact on parents, babies, family, and society. Unfortunately, the ACOG found that only 36.8% of their provider members reported consistent use of a validated screening tool, and 50.6% reported that they had never used a validated screening tool to assess for maternal depression. Similarly, another study found that 37% of women reported that their clinician did not ask about their emotional state during the postpartum visit.

In addition to addressing the need to improve maternal mental health screening overall, it is also important that screenings continue to occur well after birth. One study published in the *Journal of Pediatric Health Care* described the failure to screen postpartum mothers during well-child appointments as a missed opportunity and recommended that screening occur up to the age of 1 year.

This legislation would not only improve the rate of maternal mental health screening it would help assure that screening continues to occur during initial pediatric checkups of new born children. For these reasons MHANYS strongly supports the passage of S.7865/A.5076-A into law and further recommends that complementary maternal mental health legislation including S.7753/A.9102 and S.7752/A.9085 also become law. Together, these bills represent a comprehensive and coordinated approach to improving maternal mental health outcomes in New York State.

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