

September 10, 2024

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Chair, House Energy and Commerce
Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member, House Energy and
Commerce Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman Rodgers and Ranking Member Pallone,

On behalf of the 46 undersigned organizations who represent and support America's mothers, infants, and families, we express our strong support for the bipartisan H.R. 8715 Newborn Essentials Support Toolkit (NEST) Act, led by Reps. Julia Letlow (R-LA-05) and Dr. Kim Schrier (D-WA-08). As young families across the country struggle with the impact of inflation on the mental and physical health of both mom and baby, we strongly urge you to bring forth this commonsense legislation and move it through the Committee.

As the country faces a maternal health crisis, the cost of parenthood is only rising: now \$15,000 on average for the baby's first year.¹ For many families, the inability to afford goods and access resources has significant consequences for infant health outcomes, including infant mortality and morbidity, cognitive development, and childhood behavior concerns.² Less than sufficient household income is associated with poorer overall health and higher hospital admission rates among infants in their first five months.³

In addition, between the stress of a new child, physical recovery from childbirth, and these financial pressures, maternal mental health (MMH) conditions are the most common complication of pregnancy and childbirth. Magnified by financial hardship, MMH conditions impact one in three women of color, service women, and rural moms.^{4,5,6} Among Black women specifically, 40% will experience a maternal mental health condition and only half will receive support or treatment.⁷

The NEST Act will codify the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) pilot program to distribute newborn supply kits to new mothers and their infants. These packages will contain essential goods like diapers, wipes, maternal mental health information, and other resources, and are demonstrated to improve maternal mental health outcomes and reduce financial stress on families.⁸ In the HHS pilot, 98% of recipient mothers recommended the kit to other new parents.

¹ USA Facts. (2024). *How Much Does It Cost to Raise a Child?*

² Larson, C. P. (2007). *Poverty during pregnancy: Its effects on child health outcomes*. *Pediatrics & Child Health*, 12(8), 673–677.

³ Séguin, L., Xu, Q., Potvin, L., Zunzunegui, M.-V., & Fröhlich, K. L. (2003). *Effects of low income on infant health*. *CMAJ: Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 168(12), 1533–1538.

⁴ Weiner, S. (2023). *The toll of maternal mental illness in America*. AAMC.

⁵ Njoku, A., et al. (2023). *Listen to the Whispers before They Become Screams: Addressing Black Maternal Morbidity and Mortality in the United States*. 11(3), 438.

⁶ Rich-Edwards, J. W. (2006). *Sociodemographic predictors of antenatal and postpartum depressive symptoms among women in a medical group practice*. *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*, 60(3), 221–227.

⁷ March of Dimes. (2024). *Black Maternal Mental Health Week*.

⁸ Affairs (IEA), O. of I. and E. (2023). *Newborn Supply Kit Shows Promising Early Results*.

We urge the Committee to act quickly and move forward cost-effective, proven maternal and infant health solutions like the NEST Act. Every family deserves the chance to succeed, and NEST gives them that chance. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Aaliyah in Action

American Academy of Pediatrics

American College of Nurse-Midwives

American Dance Therapy Association

American Psychiatric Association

Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs

Building Military Families Network
carefully

Chamber of Mothers

Crisis Text Line

Every Mother Counts

George Washington University -
Washington, DC

Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and
Social Justice

Healthywomen

Honey Postpartum

Karim Counseling Services PLLC

Lifeline for Families Center and Lifeline for
Moms Program at UMass Chan Medical
School

Mamava

March of Dimes

Maternal Care Institute

Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance

Medela LLC

MILLECare

Mission: Motherhood

MomsRising

National Alliance on Mental Illness

National Association of Nurse Practitioners
in Women's Health

National Association of Pediatric Nurse
Practitioners

National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)

National INSPIRE Collaborative for
Maternal Mental Health Disparities

National League for Nursing

National Military Family Association

National Women's Health Network

Policy Center for Maternal Mental Health

Postpartum Support International

Postpartum Support Virginia

Preeclampsia Foundation

Return to Zero: Hope

Shades of Blue Project

Share the Drop

SimpliFed

The National Alliance to Advance
Adolescent Health

The Postpartum Adjustment Center
Through My Lense Consulting Services
LLC®
Treatment Communities of America
What to Expect Project