

My name is Molly, and I am a volunteer for Baby Blues Connection, as well full-time social worker in reproductive healthcare providing behavioral health therapy and case management/care coordination to pregnant and post-partum women. Most importantly, I am a mother of two children and woman in recovery. I would like to share a little bit about my experience with the committee.

I went through both my pregnancies without a partner and struggled with my mental health. I felt alone, ashamed, and uncertain about something that I believed that I should innately know how to manage on my own. During my first pregnancy, I did not feel prepared, emotionally supported, or knowledgeable to make informed decisions about my labor and birth. I made choices about my body and my baby that were pressured and based on the opinions of others. That experience and the regret I felt affected my confidence as a parent and further isolated me and my son. I struggled with managing addiction and mental health until shortly before I became pregnant with my younger son, but even when I was addressing these concerns within the healthcare system, I spent my second pregnancy feeling isolated, ashamed, and unsure. When my youngest was one year old, isolation and poorly treated mental illness finally escalated to homelessness, and my children and I lost everything. Today, I am grateful for community services and resources that I was able to access and my personal support system which have allowed me the opportunity to build a solid foundation for my children and be someone they can be proud of. Despite the happy ending, I still regret the traumatic experiences that they endured during that time, and I believe access to a doula, perinatal mental health, peer support, or other

community services during my pregnancy and postpartum period would have changed my family's life in significant ways.

I urge you to pass this bill, as many women face greater barriers to access the services and inequities that put them at higher risk. Increasing these supports has been proven to not only serve to improve the outcomes of mothers, children, and families but also strengthen our communities and heal generational trauma. Thank you.