SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 35

RECOGNIZING MAY 5, 2021 AS MATERNAL MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS DAY.

WHEREAS, perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (“PMADs”), including post-partum depression, impact women of every culture, age, income level, and race; and

WHEREAS, PMADs are the most common complication of childbirth, impacting between 10% and 20% of women; and

WHEREAS, symptoms of PMADs can include depressed mood or severe mood swings; difficulty or diminished ability to bond with the baby; diminished ability to think clearly, concentrate, or make decisions; withdrawal from family or friends; severe anxiety; panic attacks; and thoughts of self-harm; and

WHEREAS, PMADs result in maternal suffering and are associated with increased risks of marital conflict and impaired emotional, social, and cognitive development in the child; and

WHEREAS, PMADs can be triggered by complex psychological, social, and biological stressors; and

WHEREAS, women of color experience PMADs at twice the rate of Caucasian women, with 38% of new mothers of color experiencing PMADs; and

WHEREAS, 60% of women of color do not receive treatment for PMADs; and

WHEREAS, lack of insurance coverage, social and cultural stigma, logistical barriers to services, and lack of culturally appropriate care significantly contribute to inequitable access to perinatal mood and anxiety disorder treatment; and

WHEREAS, lack of access to sick leave or medical leave presents a barrier for low-income and middle-class employed mothers seeking treatment; and

WHEREAS, many women are not aware that PMADs are classified as a disability and protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”), or fear they will be discriminated against if they seek temporary accommodations under the ADA while they obtain treatment for PMADs; and
WHEREAS, COVID-19 has led to increased symptoms of anxiety and depression among pregnant women, and medical professionals recommend supporting and expanding preventative programs and interventions to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the mental health of pregnant women; and

WHEREAS, outcomes for women suffering from PMADs could be improved through expanding Medicaid to provide postpartum coverage beyond 60 days to a full year and to cover doula services, by funding training and certification of mental health providers in PMADs, and by ensuring that employees have access to paid parental leave of 12 weeks or more; and

WHEREAS, the development of childcare assistance solutions, allowing mothers to get the treatment they need without risking the care of their children, will help improve outcomes for mothers and children alike; and

WHEREAS, the Center for Women’s Emotional Wellness at Christiana Care is recognized as the only collaborative behavioral health treatment center in Delaware specializing in maternal mental health; and

WHEREAS, increasing awareness of PMADs through a public health campaign to make Delawareans aware of the need for early detection and that treatment is key to promoting early detection and eliminating the societal stigma that may prevent women from seeking treatment.

NOW, THEREFORE:

BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the 151st General Assembly of the State of Delaware, the House of Representatives concurring therein, that the General Assembly hereby designates May 5, 2021, as “Maternal Mental Health Awareness Day” in the State of Delaware.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Delaware should prioritize the health and well-being of mothers by promoting awareness of perinatal mood and anxiety disorders and working to address the social and economic barriers that contribute to, and exacerbate, these disorders, including addressing the disproportionate racial impact and barriers that prevent women from seeking and obtaining treatment.

SYNOPSIS

This resolution recognizes May 5, 2021, as Maternal Mental Health Awareness Day in Delaware.

Author: Senator Gay