



POLICY CENTER FOR Maternal Mental Health™

Model Legislation: Proclamation Request – Maternal Mental Health Month/Week

BILL TEXT

[Date]

Office of the [Title & Name of Elected Official]
[Elected Official's Address]

RE: Proclamation Request – Maternal Mental Health Month

Dear [Title & Name of Elected Official - e.g. Mayor Smith, Senator Jones]

I am writing to respectfully request that you proclaim the month of **May** as **Maternal Mental Health Awareness Month** in the **Village/City of ____**. Your proclamation would occur in conjunction with other cities and states around the United States to promote the efforts of **[insert org]** in advocacy & awareness for Maternal Mental Health.

[Insert org], founded in xxxx has a mission of: [insert mission]

The silent maternal mental health crisis impacting up to 20% of expecting and new moms.

According to the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, postpartum depression is the most common, yet most under-diagnosed, obstetrical complication in the country. Research suggests up **to 20% of the approximately 4 million U.S. women who give birth each year will be affected by a maternal mental health disorder**, including depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety and psychosis, which occur during pregnancy and up to one year postpartum and it is estimated that only about 15% of the 800,000 women who are suffering will get the help they need.

While many women feel stigmatized by asking for help, disorders like postpartum depression are a legitimate medical concern with biological influences and generally require treatment. Maternal suicide is significantly elevated among depressed perinatal women, and maternal suicides account for up to 20% of all postpartum deaths, making it one of the leading causes of maternal mortality in the perinatal period.

The recognition that would come with a proclamation from the **[Village/City/State of ____]** would be sincerely appreciated by those of us who are driven by our personal experiences to support other women and families through what they could encounter during pregnancy. It is our great desire that no woman who suffers from a perinatal mood disorder be denied access to care or let stigma prevent her from seeking out care that she truly needs should be struck with depression, anxiety, or psychosis during or following pregnancy.

[Optional: add your personal story or experience with MMH here]

We greatly appreciate your consideration of this request and, for your convenience, have enclosed content that may be useful in preparing the proclamation.

Thank you very much. We would be honored to have your support.

Sincerely,
[Your Name]
[Address]
[phone]

WHEREAS, over **[xxx]** babies are born in the **[City/state]** each year and the maternal health and, more specifically, the mental health of women before, during, and after pregnancy is an issue of great concern to women and their families and is, therefore, of interest to the **[City/state]**; and

WHEREAS, between 10 and 20 percent of new and expectant mothers are affected by Perinatal Depression and related mood disorders such as anxiety and psychosis, and they may experience associated symptoms, which are often overlooked and heavily stigmatized because new and expectant mothers suffering from a perinatal mood disorder often feel confused, ashamed, and isolated; and

WHEREAS, many at-risk women may not seek help because they are not informed about Perinatal Depression and related mood disorders as part of their health care, because there is a lack of knowledge and use of screening and assessment tools, and because they are unaware of treatment and community supportive services for Perinatal Depression and related mood disorders; and

WHEREAS, heightened awareness and increased education among all residents in the **[City/state]** regarding the incidence of Perinatal Depression is critical; Perinatal Depression and related mood disorders affect all categories of women and teenage girls regardless of their age, race, or income level; Perinatal Depression can have a profound impact on the family and significantly contribute to adverse developmental and behavioral outcomes and attachment disorders in the young children of affected women; and Perinatal Depression is highly treatable with therapeutic intervention such as medication, professional therapy and counseling, support groups and community support services including crisis hotlines.

I THEREFORE MOVE THAT, hereafter, every May, **Maternal Mental Health Awareness Month** is declared throughout the [City/state];

I FURTHER MOVE THAT the [City/state of Los Angeles] will encourage collaboration with local, state and/or national coalitions, organizations or agencies that are immensely informed on and devoted to this field of maternal mental health to facilitate increased awareness and education about Perinatal Depression and related mood disorders throughout the [City/state], to explore and encourage the use of prenatal screening tools, and to improve the availability and access to effective treatment, prevention and support services for the promotion of maternal and infant mental health in the [City /state].