



Commonwealth of Massachusetts General Court

The Ellen Story Commission on Postpartum Depression

2023 Annual Report

Report Submitted on July 10th 2023

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June 30, 2023

Her Excellency, Maura Healey
Governor of the Commonwealth
State House, Room 360
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Senator Karen E. Spilka
President of the Senate
State House, Room 332
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Representative Ronald Mariano
Speaker of the House
State House, Room 356
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Healey, President Spilka, and Speaker Mariano:

On behalf of the Ellen Story Commission on Postpartum Depression (the “Commission”), and in accordance with Chapter 313 of the Acts of 2010, we present you with the Commission’s annual report.

The Commission was honored to enter its twelfth year of work on the issue of perinatal mental health. This year, a new Co-chair was appointed from each chamber, and we welcomed six new commissioners, including a maternal fetal medicine obstetrician, a certified nurse midwife specializing in psychiatric health, and a full spectrum doula who provides community support services around grief and loss. The Commission also co-headed the statewide Mind the Gap coalition dedicated to expanding and diversifying the perinatal mental health workforce. The Department of Public Health remained an invaluable partner, the Massachusetts Child Psychiatry Access Program (“MCPAP”) for Moms and the Postpartum Depression (“PPD”) Pilot Programs continued to support many parents and families across the Commonwealth, and MassHealth’s reimbursement policy continued to cover the cost of PPD screening across the Commonwealth. The routine screening and referral mechanisms our state has established in the perinatal and postpartum period across the Commonwealth are making an essential impact on the well-being of parents, children, and families. None of this would be possible without the support of the administration and Senate and House leadership.

Last summer, the Special Legislative Commission on Racial Inequities in Maternal Health (“RIMH Commission”) released a report providing extensive findings and policy recommendations for addressing the racial disparities in rates of maternal mortality and morbidity plaguing our state and nation. The Ellen Story Commission understands the intricate connection between these disparities and mental health (particularly in relation to trauma), and has devoted significant time this year to examining the RIMH Commission’s recommendations and discussing how to advance them in order to achieve equitable health

outcomes for historically marginalized populations and parents of color in our Commonwealth. We are proud to publicly support many of the bills that have been advanced in both the House and Senate in the 193rd Session as promoting best practices for achieving these outcomes, and our work in this realm will continue into the next year and beyond. Please see **Appendix I** for a full list of bills supported by the Commission.

Significant and urgent work remains to be done in the coming year. Recent tragic headlines of mothers losing their lives, or taking the lives of their children, while in the throes of perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (“PMADs”) acutely shows some of the gaps and major challenges that persist in our systems. The incredible strain that COVID-19 placed upon our healthcare system and upon our constituents’ mental health has not dissipated. So many are struggling, while simultaneously we are facing critical behavioral healthcare workforce shortages and other substantial barriers to obtaining needed resources and care.

These current events have intensified the Commission’s motivation, focus, and commitment to its mission. The Commission also has galvanized public interest in perinatal mental health and PMADs, making that mission more important than ever. With your continued support, the Commission will move forward with its efforts to support and uplift birthing people and their families throughout the Commonwealth.

Thank you, and we hope you find this report informative.

Sincerely,



Liz Miranda
State Senator
2nd Suffolk District



Brandy Fluker Oakley
State Representative
12th Suffolk District

Enabling Statute of the Commission

The Acts of 2010

Chapter 313. AN ACT RELATIVE TO POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same as follows:

The department of public health may consult with health care providers, including, but not limited to, obstetricians, gynecologists, pediatricians and primary care providers, nonprofits and health insurance carriers regarding postpartum depression to develop a culture of awareness, de-stigmatization and screening for perinatal depression so that residents of the commonwealth may be assured of the most effective and affordable provision of public health services possible. The department shall develop standards for measuring effective screening for postpartum depression using recognized clinical standards and best practices and shall make recommendations for health plan and health care provider data reporting. The department shall issue regulations that require providers and carriers to annually submit data on screening for postpartum depression. Following the receipt of the data, the commissioner of public health shall issue an annual summary of the activities related to screening for postpartum depression, including best practices and effective screening tools. The department shall annually file the summary with the commissioner of public health and the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate not later than June 30; provided, however, that the first report is due not later than June 30, 2011.

There is hereby established a special legislative commission, pursuant to section 2A of chapter 4 of the General Laws, to be known as the Ellen Story commission on postpartum depression, to consist of 5 members of the senate, 1 of whom shall be a member of the minority party appointed by the minority leader, 1 of whom shall serve as co-chair, 5 members of the house of representatives, 1 of whom shall be a member of the minority party appointed by the minority leader, 1 of whom shall serve as co-chair, the commissioner of the department of public health, the commissioner of the department of mental health, the commissioner of insurance, the commissioner of the department of children and families, the commissioner of early education and care, and the director of Medicaid, or their designees, all of whom shall serve as ex officio members, and 18 persons to be appointed by the governor, 1 of whom shall be a representative of the Massachusetts chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, 1 of whom shall be appointed jointly by the Massachusetts Midwives Association and the Massachusetts Affiliate of the American College of Nurse Midwives who shall be a midwife licensed to practice in the commonwealth, 1 of whom shall be a representative from the Nurses United for Responsible Services who shall be an advanced practice psychiatric nurse, 1 of whom shall be a representative from the Massachusetts Coalition of Nurse Practitioners who shall be a nurse practitioner, 1 of whom shall be a representative of the Massachusetts Psychological Association who shall be a psychologist, 1 of whom shall be a representative from the children's behavioral health advisory council established in section 16Q of chapter 6A of the General Laws, 1 of whom shall be a representative from the Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership or a managed care organization or managed care entity contracting with MassHealth, 5 of whom shall be representatives of the Massachusetts Medical Society appointed in consultation with their relevant specialty chapters, including a pediatrician, an obstetrician, a family physician, a psychiatrist and a child and adolescent psychiatrist, 1 of whom shall be a woman who has experienced postpartum depression, 1 of whom shall be a representative from a regionally-based nonprofit group currently serving women suffering from postpartum depression, 1 of whom shall be a representative from the Massachusetts Association of Health Plans and 3 of whom shall be representatives from commercial health insurance carriers or managed care organizations doing business in the commonwealth, is hereby established for the purpose of making an investigation and study relative to postpartum depression, including, but not limited to: (i) an assessment of current research on the subject and whether there exist evidence-based, best or promising practices on the prevention, detection or treatment of postpartum depression; (ii) a review of current policies and practices with respect to screenings for postpartum depression, including the frequency and location of screenings and training personnel administering the screenings, the availability of reimbursement and issues relative to medical necessity and third-party coverage; (iii) provision of assistance to the department of public health, other state agencies and

organizations in the development of professional and public educational materials and programs on postpartum depression, in the development of referral lists for postpartum depression treatment, building on existing resources and in the designation of authorized validated screening tools; (iv) provision of assistance to the department of public health, other state agencies and organizations relative to applications for federal funding to support efforts consistent with the mission and purpose of the commission; and (v) any other matters that the commission considers relevant to the fulfillment of its mission and purpose. The co-chairs of the commission may each appoint up to 3 additional commission members to fulfill the purpose of the commission.

Said commission shall provide guidance and advice to the governor, the general court and the secretary of health and human services relative to current research on postpartum depression including, but not limited to, best and promising practices in the prevention, detection and treatment of postpartum depression and recommend policies, including legislation, to promote greater public awareness, screening and treatment of postpartum depression. The special commission may conduct public hearings, forums or meetings to gather information and to raise awareness of postpartum depression, including the sponsorship of or participation in statewide or regional conferences.

Said commission shall file an annual report at the end of each state fiscal year with the governor and the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate, who shall forward the same to the joint committee on public health and the joint committee on financial services, along with recommendations, if any, together with drafts of legislation necessary to carry those recommendations into effect. The special commission may file such interim reports and recommendations as it considers appropriate.

Approved, August 19, 2010; Amended November 2, 2015 and December 19, 2016

List of Commission Members

Sen. Liz Miranda, Senate Co-chair
Rep. Brandy Fluker Oakley, House Co-chair
Lauren Almeida, Department of Children and Families, Designee
Rebecca Butler, Commissioner of Insurance, Designee
Beth Buxton, Department of Public Health, Designee
Dr. Lee Cohen, Psychiatrist, Massachusetts Medical Society
Jessie Colbert, House Co-chair Appointment
Stehpanie Crawford, House Co-chair Appointment
Rep. Mindy Domb, House Member
Rep. Kimberly N. Ferguson, House Member
Rep. Carole Fiola, House Member
Karen Garber, National Association of Social Workers
Jennifer Gilbert-Cohen, American College of Nurse Midwives and Massachusetts Midwives Association
Nneka Hall, Senate Co-chair Appointment
Dr. Julie Johnston, Family Physician, Massachusetts Medical Society
Sen. John Keenan, Senate Member
Sarah Hodin Krinsky, Director of Medicaid, Designee
Divya Kumar, A woman who has experienced postpartum depression
Kerry LaBounty, Health New England, Commercial health insurance representative
Dr. Nadja Lopez-Reilly, Representative from a regionally-based nonprofit group currently serving women suffering from postpartum depression
Sen. Joan Lovely, Senate Member
Dr. Leena Mittal, Senate Co-chair Appointment
Dr. Tiffany A. Moore Simas, Obstetrician, Massachusetts Medical Society
Elizabeth Murphy, Esq., Massachusetts Association of Health Plans
Tyreese Nicolas, Department of Early Education and Care, Designee
Rep. James J. O'Day, House Member
Margarita O'Neill-Arana, Department of Mental Health, Designee
Sen. Becca Rausch, Senate Member
Timoria McQueen Saba, House Co-chair Appointment
Dr. Lisa Scarfo, Neighborhood Health Plan, managed care organization representative
Dr. Jayne Singer, Massachusetts Psychological Association
Dr. Joshua Sparrow, Child Psychiatrist, Massachusetts Medical Society
Sen. Bruce Tarr, Senate Member
Dr. Chloe Zera, Senate Co-chair Appointment

Summary of Meetings and Events

Meeting 41 - July 13, 2022 (virtual)

The Commission received updates on a number of maternal health related bills from the 192nd legislative session. Commissioner Jessie Colbert spoke about the Mind the Gap Initiative through Postpartum Support International, and building a coalition in the fall around the conversation on the mental health crisis and workforce pipeline. The Commission was asked to formally join the coalition.

The Commission discussed and debriefed on its 7th Annual Perinatal Mental Health Awareness Day, which included presentations on out-of-hospital birth and midwifery care, and on screening and uplifting fathers. This led to a discussion of the planned closure of the North Shore Birth Center, about out-of-hospital birth option being an issue of reproductive choice (in light of recent events, i.e., the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*), and how evidence has affirmed that Black birthing people are less likely to experience mistreatment when receiving midwifery care.

Meeting 42 - October 27, 2022 (virtual)

During this meeting, commissioners discussed vacant commission seats and their desire to have more commission seats available for direct service clinical providers and community health workers. It was discussed that seats cannot be added or re-categorized without a legislative amendment to the enabling statute.

Commissioner Nneka Hall gave a presentation to the Commission highlighting certain recommendations from the RIMH Commission's report. The highlighted recommendations included: implementing the Mother IS Supreme's vision of postpartum care, establishing kick counting as a standard of care, expanding the number of neighborhood birth centers, expanding Medicaid coverage through one year postpartum, creating and passing a birthing justice "Momnibus bill", creating a birthing justice task force, and incentivizing hospital systems to connect patients to community-based services. A copy of the presentation can be found by visiting:

https://www.ppdcommission.com/_files/ugd/fb1dc9_47ef4f93bb6344f8b66a8f3a5c312523.pdf.

Commissioners were asked to reflect upon Commissioner Hall's presentation and be prepared to attend a supplemental meeting to nail down action items before the new legislative session's start in January.

Meeting 43 - December 14, 2022 (virtual)

During this supplemental meeting, Commission Coordinator Ashley Healy gave a presentation concerning action items for the Commission to undertake in line with the RIMH Commission's recommendations, in an effort to apply commissioners' expertise toward ensuring that suggested policies in the upcoming legislative session fully address PMADs, from prevention and screening to treatment, access, and more.

Action items from the presentation included: 1) endorsing efforts to improve the perinatal experience, for example by uplifting the Mother IS Supreme vision for postpartum care, expanding the number of birth centers, increasing access to community resources, expanding the birth worker workforce, and supporting related requests for legislative funding; 2) working to raise public and legislative awareness of issues the impact perinatal mental health, for example by explaining the connection that exists between mental health outcomes and adverse experiences such as pregnancy and infant loss, severe morbidity, traumatic birth, disrespectful care, and systemic racism; 3) supporting efforts to expand and diversify the perinatal behavioral health workforce by joining the Mind the Gap coalition; and 4) contributing to the legislative process by having commissioners attend committee hearings on bills and provide written or oral testimony, by providing written letters of support to committees hearing bills, and by holding public-facing events to raise awareness, educate the community on the legislation, and empower constituents to participate in the process. A copy of the presentation can be found by visiting: https://www.ppdcommission.com/files/ugd/fb1dc9_71e4cf87ce10457289ead651d25746f7.pdf

Meeting 44 - February 15, 2023 (virtual)

This meeting took place in close proximity to a tragic occurrence in Duxbury, Massachusetts in which Lindsay Clancy, a mother of three, allegedly fatally strangled her children and then attempted to take her own life. Many members of the press and public were present.

The Commission welcomed Sen. Liz Miranda as the new Senate Co-chair. Commissioners received a presentation from Commission Coordinator Ashley Healy, Commissioner Sen. Becca Rausch, Commissioner Rep. Carole Fiola, Commissioner Rep. Mindy Domb, and Co-chair Sen. Liz Miranda concerning newly filed bills in the 193rd session related to perinatal mental health and maternal health.

The Commission discussed proposed legislation addressed to postpartum psychosis and other serious perinatal psychiatric complications. Commissioners were asked to contribute ideas for bill language to add proactive provisions and ensure policy that is responsive to the needs of individuals struggling with perinatal psychiatric complications.

The Commission discussed plans for the upcoming Perinatal Mental Health Awareness Day at the State House.

8th Annual Perinatal Mental Health Awareness Day - May 5, 2023

The eighth annual Perinatal Mental Health Awareness Day commemorated International Bereaved Mother's Day, which occurs on the first Sunday of May each year. The Commission recognized that the trauma and grief surrounding miscarriage, stillbirth, infant, and child loss can have long-lasting impacts on parents' and families' emotional health and well-being. During this event, which was held in the Great Hall at the State House, attendees visited tables hosted by various organizations providing services and resources to individuals grappling with loss, received written materials about resources and pending legislation related to these topics, and enjoyed a powerful and moving speaking program, including opening remarks from Co-chairs Sen. Liz Miranda and Rep. Brandy Fluker Oakley, lived experiences, and a keynote address from Dr. Karen Abdool, psychiatrist and founder of Beryllium Psychiatric Services. Please see **Appendix II** for the speaker program and list of vendors.

Meeting 45 - May 10, 2023 (virtual)

At this meeting, the Commission welcomed Rep. Brandy Fluker Oakley as the new House Co-chair. Commissioners discussed legislation that was filed relative to postpartum psychosis, and methods of bill tracking and keeping up to date on the legislative process of important bills to the Commission including on the Advocacy page of the Commission's website and in a legislative tracking table maintained by Commission Coordinator Ashley Healy).

Commissioners discussed Maternal Mental Health Month events and awareness-raising tools, and debriefed on the 8th Annual Perinatal Mental Health Awareness Day. The Commission learned that the Massachusetts chapter of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists would be honoring former Commission Co-chairs, Sen. Joan Lovely and Rep. Jim O'Day, at its upcoming Advocacy Day.

Massachusetts Mind the Gap Coalition and Moms Matter Act

Mind the Gap is Postpartum Support International ("PSI")'s national strategic action plan to tackle the crisis of undiagnosed and untreated perinatal mental health disorders across the United States. This year, in partnership with the Mass. PPD Fund and the Women of Color Health Equity Collective, the Commission formed and led a diverse coalition of stakeholders across Massachusetts dedicated to advancing a selected piece of legislation from the Mind the Gap national policy agenda. The Massachusetts Mind the Gap coalition elected to champion legislation creating two grant programs: the first would grow and diversify the perinatal mental health workforce by investing in schools or programs offering education and training in PMH, and the second would invest in a range of community-based programs

that support PMH, with priority given to historically underserved populations and geographic areas.¹

Beginning in the summer of 2022, the Commission convened dozens of meetings, including Massachusetts Mind the Gap coalition and steering committee meetings, and meetings with stakeholders, legislators, regional advocacy groups, and potential endorsing organizations. In December 2022, the Commission was invited to present on the Massachusetts Mind the Gap coalition's work to members of Mind the Gap national and PSI national, including PSI's president, Wendy Davis. The Commission also presented at a legislative briefing on the Moms Matter Act (H.1984/S.1261) in March 2023. The Commission (and many other members of the Massachusetts Mind the Gap Coalition) will testify in support of the Moms Matter Act at a legislative hearing on July 10, 2023 before the Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use and Recovery.

More information on the Moms Matter Act, including a fact sheet and list of endorsing organizations, can be found by visiting: <https://massppdfund.org/momsmatteract>.

¹ The bill is H.1984/S.1261 *An Act to expand equitable perinatal mental health services*, and sometimes is referred to as the "Moms Matter Act" after the federal legislation on which it was modeled.

Future Goals

In the coming year, the Commission will continue to work on multiple projects promoting, expanding, and improving screening, treatment, and awareness of perinatal mental health for mothers and fathers, as well as ensuring that adequate, accessible, and culturally congruent resources exist to support parents at the institutional and community levels.

The Commission also will work to address the disparities that parents of color face during the perinatal period, with the goal of alleviating the impact that structural racism and that unequal access to perinatal mental health care has on communities of color. The Commission will investigate and determine ways to address the cultural and geographic inequities that create barriers to accessing perinatal mental health care across the Commonwealth. The RIMH Commission's recommendations will guide the Commission in pursuing and implementing these goals.

In July 2023, the Commission will partner with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services for Region 1 for a public-facing roundtable discussion highlighting the maternal health crisis, with a focus on postpartum and perinatal mood disorders. The Commission expects to continue to work with HHS on this critical issue.

Beginning in the fall of 2023, the Commission will establish working groups to investigate and study specific, complex topics related to the Commission's mission. Working groups will, among other things, meet with subject matter experts, conduct listening sessions with members of the public in various areas of the state, and publish a report of its findings within a year.

The Commission's work and findings will continue to be shared locally and nationally through the following channels:

- Commission's website: ppdcommission.com,
- Twitter: twitter.com/ppdcommission, and
- Instagram: instagram.com/ppdcommission.

The Commission will continue to assist MCPAP for Moms and the PPD Community Health Center pilot programs through continued advocacy and legislative support. Finally, the Commission will pursue other goals as determined by the Commission.

Appendix I: 2023-2024 Supported Legislation²

H.149/S.104 *An Act establishing a diaper benefits pilot program*

Creates a pilot program addressing diaper need and diaper insufficiency by providing diapers to low-income parents through diaper banks, food banks, and food pantries.

H.985/S.672 *An Act increasing access to maternal postpartum home visiting services*

Establishes a statewide system of programs providing universal postpartum home visiting services and require insurance coverage for at least one visit within 8 weeks postpartum.

H.1240/S.782 *An Act relative to Medicaid coverage for doula services*

Requires coverage of doula services (physical, informational, and emotional support) to pregnant and postpartum individuals up to 12 months following the end of pregnancy.

H.1948/S.1201 *An Act relative to paid pregnancy loss leave*

Requires employers to grant employees 10 days of paid leave for absence related to pregnancy loss, or to care for a spouse or domestic partner experiencing pregnancy loss.

H.1984/S.1261 *An Act to expand equitable perinatal mental health services*

Establishes two grant programs; one would grow and diversify the perinatal mental health workforce by investing in schools or programs offering education and training in PMH, and the second would invest in a range of community-based programs that support PMH.

H.2163/S.1375 *An Act relative to postpartum depression screenings*

Requires MassHealth to cover screening for PPD in mothers at pediatrician's visits up to one year following birth.

H.2187 *An Act relative to conducting fetal and infant mortality review*

Requires local health agencies to conduct in-depth review of each individual fetal and infant death to identify local factors associated with these deaths, including racial inequities in infant and fetal health outcomes.

H.2209/S.1457 *An Act promoting access to midwifery care and out-of-hospital birth options*

Creates licensure for midwives who provide out-of-hospital birth care under the oversight of a new Board of Midwifery, permits midwives to carry and administer life-saving medications, and provides health payer coverage for midwifery services.

H.2265 *An Act relative to pregnancy loss awareness*

Requires DPH to disseminate information to the public on pregnancy loss and the accessibility of a range of evidence-based treatment options for pregnancy loss, including comprehensive mental health support and culturally responsive supports such as pregnancy loss doula care.

² The Commission maintains and continuously updates its list of supported bills on its website. For the most up-to-date information, please visit: <https://www.ppdcommission.com/legislative-advocacy>.

H.3616/S.1335 *An Act updating the regulations governing licensed birth centers in Massachusetts*

Supports new and existing birth centers by addressing regulations that inhibit the development and sustainability of freestanding birth centers.

H.3939/S.2398 *An Act relative to the wellbeing of new mothers and infants*

Creates a centralized, comprehensive digital resource center on PMADs for use by patients and providers, ensures that any defendant in a criminal proceeding who gave birth within 12 months prior to the alleged crime be screened for perinatal psychiatric complications, and establishes perinatal psychiatric complications as a mitigating circumstance to be considered in sentencing of criminal defendants.

S.708 *An Act enhancing post-pregnancy mental health care*

Targets harmful impacts of unaddressed post-pregnancy mental health needs, by requiring full insurance coverage for all post-pregnancy mental health needs.

S.1415 *An Act relative to birthing justice in the Commonwealth*

An omnibus bill encompassing many policies addressing perinatal health, equity, and birthing justice.

Appendix II: 2023 Perinatal Mental Health Awareness Day Program and Speakers

International Bereaved Mother's Awareness Day May 5, 2023



Today, we gather to commemorate International Bereaved Mother's Day, to share support and resources for grieving parents, and to honor the children who have been lost.

Please enjoy the vendors (see reverse) and refreshments! The speaking program will begin at approximately 11:30 a.m.

Thank you for being here!

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| 11:30 - 11:45 | Welcome remarks by Ellen Story Commission Co-chairs, Sen. Liz Miranda and Rep. Brandy Fluker Oakley |
| 11:45 - 12:00 | Samantha LaCroix , <i>Count the Kicks</i> |
| 12:15 - 12:30 | Jessica Paulino , <i>The EMA Project</i> |
| 12:30 - 1:00 | Dr. Karen Abdool , <i>Psychiatrist</i> |
| 1:00 - 1:15 | Clementina Chéry , <i>Louis D. Brown Peace Institute</i> |
| 1:15 - 1:30 | Kenneth Pritchard, Jr. , <i>bereaved father</i> |
| 1:30 - 1:45 | Closing remarks from event organizers |
| 1:45 | Say their names |

Thank you to our amazing vendors!

- AwakeIntuMind
- Beryllium
- Brazelton Touchpoints Center
- Count the Kicks
- Family Well Health
- Fancy Formations
- LIFEMADEEZER Holistic Wellness
- March of Dimes
- Mass. Lactation Consultant Association
- Mass. PPD Fund
- Melanin Mass Moms
- Neighborhood Trauma Team
- North Shore Postpartum Help
- MOTHER Lab
- Propa City Community Outreach
- Pure Spark
- Resolve New England
- Sisters of Aya