

**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HILDA L. SOLIS  
AND JANICE HAHN**

**AUGUST 6, 2019**

**Supporting AB 577 Medi-Cal Coverage for Maternal Mental Health**

Maternal mental health conditions are the most common obstetric complication in the United States. According to the American Psychological Association, postpartum depression affects 1 in 7 women nationwide. Postpartum depression can affect women days or even months after delivering their baby, and these conditions often go undiagnosed and untreated. Maternal mental health conditions that are left untreated can negatively impact a child’s emotional health, affect early bonding between mother and infant, and limit a child’s ability to reach developmental milestones.

Many new mothers are employed, oftentimes with more than one job, and are raising more than one child while struggling to balance the high costs of living in Los Angeles County. One study from the San Jose State University School of Nursing found that women of low socioeconomic status were 11 times more likely to develop postpartum depression symptoms than women of higher socioeconomic status. Although mothers who qualify for Medi-Cal are able to access pregnancy-related and postpartum health care, including mental health care, these benefits end only 60 days after the last day of pregnancy. The benefit period is clearly insufficient since postpartum depression can occur up to a year after giving birth.

Working mothers raising children in poverty are faced with additional, interrelated challenges and have less access to resources that can assist them with this day-to-day struggle. California Surgeon General Dr. Nadine Burke Harris has described toxic stress as truly detrimental to a child’s growth and well-being. In the absence of protective factors, a child is left to self-soothe and can experience greater distress. Oftentimes, undiagnosed

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MOTION

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mental illness can negatively impact a caregiver's response to their infant's cues. These types of interactions affect a child's overall emotional health and places them at a higher risk for neglect or abuse. As a result, these mothers tend to be overrepresented in the child welfare system.

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH) has worked tirelessly to eliminate health disparities through their Maternal, Child, and Adolescent Health (MCAH) Programs. Their work has also addressed the barriers that exist when a family's lack of adequate health insurance can impact their access to vital services, including maternal mental health.

AB 577 (Eggman) would extend Medi-Cal postpartum care from 60 days to one year for women diagnosed with a maternal mental health condition, ensuring no gap in coverage and improving access to postpartum mental health services. AB 577 would help combat inequities in the maternal mental health delivery system, thereby improving outcomes for mothers, children, and the whole family.

**WE, THEREFORE, MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS TO:**

Direct the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to send a 5-signature letter to the author, Legislative leadership, the Los Angeles County State Legislative Delegation, and the Governor expressing the County's strong support of AB 577.

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HLS: jvall