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Testimony to House Public Health Committee on House Bill 2618 (Walle/Thierry/Morales)

NAMI Texas is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization founded by volunteers in 1984. We are part of the nation's largest grassroots mental health organizations and we exist to help improve the quality of life for individuals with mental illness and their families. Around the state, we have 27 local NAMI affiliate organizations and approximately 2,000 members.

Mental health issues are common with new mothers in Texas.

- One in six new mothers in Texas suffer from perinatal depression.¹
- Around half of parenting teens and low-income mothers experience depressive symptoms.¹
- Over half of women with perinatal depression are not diagnosed.¹
- Thirty-seven percent of low-income mothers with young children who experience a major depressive disorder do not receive any kind of mental health treatment.¹

Without treatment, mental health disorders can impact the entire family.

- At least one third of adults with a substance use disorder in Texas also have a mental health disorder.²
- Women with untreated perinatal depression are four times more likely to visit the emergency room and have 90 percent higher health care costs.¹
- Almost 9 percent of maternal deaths were due to suicide, and 85 percent of these deaths occurred more than 60 days postpartum.³
- **Drug overdose accounted for 17 percent of all maternal deaths, and almost 80 percent of these deaths that occurred more than 60 days postpartum.**³

Peer Support Specialists can help

- Peer support services are delivered to a person with a serious mental illness or co-occurring mental and substance use disorders by a person in recovery.⁴
- Peers offers social support throughout the treatment process to facilitate long-term recovery in the community.⁴
- Peer support can help pregnant women and new mothers with mental health conditions understand their condition, access treatment, reduce social isolation, and strengthen social support networks.⁴

Peer support services have seen growth and success in Texas

- In 2017, Texas passed House Bill 1486 (Price) to create a Medicaid billing code for peer support specialists and regulation standards for training and certifications so the service can be expanded across the state.
- In the 84th legislative session, Rider 73 created a pilot program to use peer support specialists in county jails. This program has been incredibly effective in reducing recidivism and continues to receive funding.

The bill would place certified peer support specialists in federally qualified health centers that are located in 3-5 counties. It would be designed to determine if peer support specialists could be an effective tool to address perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (ex. postpartum depression) in low-income pregnant women and new mothers within a year postpartum.

Role of peer	Training and certification for peers	Chosen sites	Role of Health Centers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provides services within the scope of services for certified peer support specialists defined by HHSC. ● Works specifically with women with mental health issues within a year postpartum ● Provides guidance and information on mental health resources as appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Uses existing channels approved by HHSC for training and certification of peer support specialists ● Receives a specialized training on perinatal mood and anxiety disorders developed by HHSC 	Federally Qualified Health Centers in 5 counties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● At least 1 urban county ● At least 1 rural county ● Experience high rates of maternal mortality -OR- ● Are in mental health professional shortage areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Work with HHSC to develop and implement pilot program plan for their site ● Integrate peer support specialist into work setting and interprofessional team ● Refer patients at risk to receive voluntary services from peer

References

1. Texans Care for Children (2017). Alone No More: How Texas Policymakers Can Support Mothers with Perinatal Depression.
2. Meadows Public Policy Institute (2018, March). "Substance Use Disorder Landscape."
3. Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Task Force (2018, September). Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Task Force and Department of State Health Services Joint Biennial Report. Texas Department of Health and Human Services.
4. Chinman, M., George, P., Dougherty, R.H., Daniels, A.S., Shoma Ghose, S., Swift, A., Delphin-Rittmon, M.E. (2014, Apr.). Peer Support Services for Individuals With Serious Mental Illnesses: Assessing the Evidence. Psychiatric Services. 65(4).