



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 406

Resolution designating May annually as Maternal Mental Health Awareness Month in the City of New York and calling on the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, S.156/A.6603, which would make the same designation Statewide.

By Council Members Lee, Restler, Gutiérrez, Farías and Hanif

Whereas, S.156, introduced on January 4, 2023, by New York State (NYS) Senator Liz Kreuger, representing NYS Senate District 28 in Manhattan, and pending in the State Senate, would amend the executive law to designate May annually as Maternal Mental Health Awareness Month in NYS; and

Whereas, Companion bill, A.6603, introduced on April 24, 2023, by Assembly Member Karines Reyes, representing NYS Assembly District 87 in the Bronx, and pending in the State Assembly, would provide for the same commemorative designation; and

Whereas, This NYS legislation intends to support maternal mental health by raising awareness both of the mental health disorders that can occur during and just after pregnancy and of the treatments that are available to remedy them; and

Whereas, As reported in the December 2023 *AAMCNews*, the newsletter of the Association of American Medical Colleges, one in five women in the United States (U.S.) annually experiences a mental health or substance use disorder during the “perinatal period,” which includes the months of pregnancy and one year after the birth; and

Whereas, Although postpartum depression is the most common mental health illness during the perinatal period, more serious mental health illnesses also occur and can lead to suicide or infanticide; and

Whereas, Perinatal mental health illnesses are the leading cause of maternal deaths in the U.S.,

accounting for 23 percent of maternal deaths overall and for an even higher percentage of deaths among Black and Native American individuals, who are less likely to get the care that they need; and

Whereas, Although many maternal mental health illnesses respond well to treatment, about 75 percent of those suffering from them do not ever get any treatment due to a variety of reasons, including lack of screening for the illnesses, unavailability of adequate local care, and the patient's feelings of shame about being ill; and

Whereas, There are a variety of inpatient and outpatient treatments that can successfully help those suffering from perinatal mental health issues, including new safe medications, individual therapy, couples therapy, and group therapy; and

Whereas, In September 2023, a new federal Task Force on Maternal Mental Health was created to improve health care in this field, with a focus on mental health equity; and

Whereas, According to the Policy Center for Maternal Mental Health's 2023 State Report Cards, the U.S. received an overall grade of D when it came to supporting maternal mental health, with a grade of D or F earned by 40 states and the District of Columbia; and

Whereas, NYS received a grade of D, in part due to a poor perinatal mental health provider-to-patient ratio, the lack of a State maternal mental health task force or commission, and the lack of required screenings by doctors for maternal mental health disorders during the perinatal period; and

Whereas, According to data published in September 2023 by the NYC Maternal Mortality Review Committee (MMRC), under the auspices of the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, there were 100,022 live births in NYC in 2020; and

Whereas, According to MMRC data, mental health conditions accounted for about 22 percent of pregnancy-associated deaths in NYC in 2020, or 11 of 51 such deaths, and were the leading underlying cause of pregnancy-associated deaths; and

Whereas, These data indicate that it is appropriate to focus attention and resources on examining the

causes of and treatments for maternal mental health illnesses, both in NYC and Statewide; now, therefore, be it Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York designates May annually as Maternal Mental Health Awareness Month in the City of New York and calls on the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, S.156/A.6603, which would make the same designation Statewide.

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RHP