



State Senator
TINA MAHARATH

3rd District

**Sponsor Testimony
Senator Tina Maharath
Senate Bill 104
Health Committee
Wednesday, October 27, 2021**

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chairman Antani, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 104.

Senate Bill 104 designates the first week of May as “Maternal Mental Health Awareness Week” to raise awareness and lift the stigma of mental illness in mothers during and after childbirth. It is also meant to inspire the Ohio Legislature and all Ohioans to take action to help fight maternal mental illness.

Maternal Mental Health (MMH) disorders include a range of disorders including depression, anxiety, and psychosis. They can occur during pregnancy or the postpartum period. In the United States, less than 15% of women receive treatment for maternal mental health disorders. When left untreated, these disorders can cause devastating consequences for the mother, her baby, her family and society. Maternal mental health disorders, especially depression, are a widespread, common health issue among women in Ohio and around the country. It is estimated that one in five women in their childbearing and childrearing years suffer from some form of depression. Mothers under the age of 30, low-income women, women with low education levels and immigrants are at an even greater risk.

Symptoms of maternal depression include sadness, irritability, social isolation, hopelessness and fatigue. It can also result in a lack of interest in one’s self and their children. Maternal depression is treatable; however social norms and other barriers can prevent mothers from seeking care.

Reducing the stigma in seeking treatment is one reason why it’s important that we bring attention to this issue by designating a Maternal Mental Health Awareness Week. I appreciate your attention to this important issue and I respectfully request your favorable consideration of Senate Bill 104. Thank you and I am happy to respond to questions from the committee.