

REPORT OF THE CHIEF LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

DATE: June 9, 2021

TO: Honorable Members of the Rules, Elections, and Intergovernmental Relations Committee

FROM: Sharon M. Tso 
Chief Legislative Analyst Council File No: 21-0002-S113
Assignment No: 21-05-0407

SUBJECT: Revised resolution to support AB 935 (Maienschein), the Mothers and Children Mental Health Support Act of 2021.

CLA RECOMMENDATION: Adopt revised Resolution to include in the City's 2021-2022 State Legislative Program SUPPORT for AB 935 (Maienschein), the Mothers and Children Mental Health Support Act of 2021, to improve screening and referral processes for perinatal depression, access to therapy, medication, and other services for expecting and new mothers and children.

SUMMARY

Resolution (Koretz – Martinez – Raman – Rodriguez – O'Farrell), introduced on May 4, 2021, notes that approximately 140,000 babies are born in Los Angeles County each year. According to the Mayo Clinic, as many as four in five mothers experience the "baby blues", accompanied by mood swings, anxiety, sadness, irritability, feeling overwhelmed, reduced concentration, appetite problems, and trouble sleeping.

AB 935 (Maienschein) would establish the Mothers and Children Mental Health Support Act of 2021, requiring among other provisions, for a health plan or insurer, in order to more quickly diagnose and treat pregnant and postpartum persons suffering from mental illness, to provide access to a telehealth consultation program that gives providers who treat persons who are pregnant or up to one year postpartum with access to a mental health consultation. Further, AB 935 would require that the telehealth consultation program include a triage service and consultation by a mental health clinician with expertise appropriate for pregnant, postpartum, and pediatric patients, including a psychiatrist when appropriate or requested by the treatment provider.

A revised Resolution that makes a technical correction to the bill number is attached for consideration. The revised Resolution recommends support for AB 935.

BACKGROUND

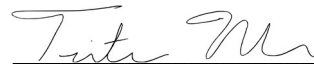
Existing law requires California obstetric providers, including OB/GYNs, family practice providers and nurse practitioners, to either offer to screen or appropriately screen patients for maternal mental health disorders at least once during the perinatal period. Additionally, state health plans and health insurers are required to create programs to address these disorders.

Prior to the pandemic, it was estimated that 1 in 5 women, or 100,000 California mothers each year, suffer from a maternal mental health disorder such as depression, anxiety, or psychosis during pregnancy or within the first year after childbirth. Studies have shown that the rates of anxiety and depression symptoms more than doubled during the pandemic among pregnant and postpartum persons. Fewer than 15% of pregnant and postpartum persons exhibiting symptoms of anxiety and depression receive appropriate mental health treatment.

AB 935 would improve access to mental health care by requiring health insurers and plans to develop a provider-to-provider telehealth consultation program to connect primary care providers with experts in maternal or pediatric mental health to enable providers to appropriately diagnose and best treat children and pregnant or postpartum patients experiencing a mental health disorder.

BILL STATUS

02/17/21	Introduced.
02/25/21	Referred to the Committee on Health.
04/28/21	Passed and referred to the Committee on Appropriations.



Tristan Noack
Analyst

SMT:tcjn

Attachment: Revised Resolution

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, any official position of the City of Los Angeles, with respect to legislation, rules, regulations or policies proposed to or pending before a local, state, or federal governmental body or agency must have first been adopted in the form of a Resolution by the City Council with the concurrence of the Mayor; and

WHEREAS, approximately 140,000 babies are born in Los Angeles County each year; and

WHEREAS, according to the Mayo Clinic, as many as four in five mothers experience the "baby blues", accompanied by mood swings, anxiety, sadness, irritability, feeling overwhelmed, reduced concentration, appetite problems, and trouble sleeping; and

WHEREAS, according to the California Department of Public Health, one in five expecting and new mothers experience perinatal depression, characterized by depressed mood or severe mood swings excessive crying, difficulty bonding with your baby, withdrawing from family and friends, inability to sleep or sleeping too much, overwhelming fatigue or loss of energy, intense irritability and anger, fear that you are not a good mother, and severe anxiety and panic attacks, amongst others; and

WHEREAS, while perinatal depression can affect any mother -regardless of age, race, income, culture, or education- the rates are much higher among low-income and immigrant mothers and communities of color, with nearly one in two reporting elevated postpartum depressive symptoms; and

WHEREAS, perinatal depression can be caused by a variety of physical, emotional and social changes or circumstances, including a dramatic drop in hormones (estrogen and progesterone), a personal or family history of depression or mood disorders, sleep deprivation or a feeling of being overwhelmed, experiencing a stressful event such as a job loss or health crisis, limited social support, living alone or marital conflict; and

WHEREAS, the continued stigma associated with perinatal depression has led to decreased awareness and lower access to treatment - this reality was laid bare in April 2021 with the tragic deaths of three children at the hands of their mother Liliana Carrillo, who was suffering from postpartum psychosis; and

WHEREAS, AB 935 (Maienschein) would establish the Mothers and Children Mental Health Support Act of 2021, requiring among other provisions, for a health plan or insurer, in order to more quickly diagnose and treat pregnant and postpartum persons suffering from mental illness, to provide access to a telehealth consultation program that gives providers who treat persons who are pregnant or up to one year postpartum with access to a mental health consultation; and

WHEREAS, AB 935 also requires that the telehealth consultation program include a triage service and consultation by a mental health clinician with expertise appropriate for pregnant, postpartum, and pediatric patients, including a psychiatrist when appropriate or requested by the treating provider;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, with the concurrence of the Mayor, that by the adoption of this Resolution, the City of Los Angeles hereby includes in its 2021-2022 State Legislative Program SUPPORT for AB 935 (Maienschein), the Mothers and Children Mental Health Support Act of 2021, to improve screening and referral processes for perinatal depression, access to therapy, medication, and other services for expecting and new mothers and children.