

March 24, 2025

**Women's Foundation of Minnesota Supports SF 1085/ HF 35**

Minnesota Senate Health and Human Services committee members,

As the President & CEO of the Women's Foundation of Minnesota, I am writing to express our support for SF 1085, a bill requiring health plans to develop a maternal mental health program. We believe that increasing access to preventative health care, inclusive of mental and reproductive health, will support stronger health outcomes in all communities.

An estimated 75 percent of women impacted by a maternal mental health disorder do not receive the treatment they need. So, they do what generations of women have done: suffer alone, often in guilt and shame, unheard and untreated, sometimes with tragic results. The Minnesota's Department of Health Maternal Mortality Update found that 20 percent of maternal deaths between 2017-2019 were caused by mental health conditions. The same report notes that mental health issues as a cause of pregnancy-associated fatalities have risen when compared to other prevalent causes of death. This is not an issue that's going away.

Barriers to maternal mental health care still exist. Along with stigma and cost, accessing mental healthcare providers can be incredibly difficult to do on your own. In our [2024 Status of Women and Girls+ report](#), we found that approximately 80 percent of Minnesota counties have a shortage of mental health professionals.

We have the opportunity with this bill to meet people where they are, to let them know that this is not theirs to struggle with alone and to be the lifeline they need at this crucial time. When health plans connect providers to resources, it breaks down the access barrier that challenges rural communities, communities of color, and those living in poverty. By requiring screenings as a routine part of perinatal care, it removes the shame and stigma a patient might feel in asking for help and increases the likelihood that emerging issues will be flagged earlier, with lifesaving benefits. Investing in health solutions makes long-term fiscal sense and savings for health care systems.

According to the Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance, maternal mental health conditions are the most common pregnancy and childbirth complication. We can guarantee that there is someone in your life, whether you know it or not, who has struggled with their mental health during or after their pregnancy. For them and for all families, we ask that you support Senate File 1085.



Gloria Perez  
President & CEO