



SB 138 “FLORIDA FAMILIES FIRST ACT”

ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

- AUDIENCE:** Florida legislators (Senators and Representatives)
- OBJECTIVE:** Educate/create awareness of the impact perinatal mental illness has on their constituents when left unrecognized and untreated

WHAT DOES THE BILL SAY?

SB 138 (2018) “FLORIDA FAMILIES FIRST ACT” introduced by Senator Lauren Book, originally filed on 8/11/2017

This bill identifies and introduces the following and can be found [HERE](#). Below is a summary:

- Focus on perinatal mental illness
- Notes two-generation costs of unrecognized/untreated perinatal mental illness in Florida: approx. \$900 million annually
- Approximately 40,000 Florida babies annually born to parent experiencing perinatal mental illness
 - Lists social/emotional/cognitive detriments to baby if parent’s mental illness left untreated
- Directs the FL Department of Health to do the following BY JANUARY 1, 2019:
 - Establish and maintain PUBLIC toll-free hotline that provides:
 - Basic info on perinatal mental illness
 - Referral to appropriate community resources
 - Establish and maintain a PROVIDER hotline that provides:
 - Assistance to medical providers addressing perinatal mental illness
 - Referral to expert medical providers in the state
 - Compile resources to coordinate efficient and coordinated care of pregnant and postpartum patients
 - Create Public Service Announcements (PSAs) to educate the public; PSAs must include the public toll-free hotline
 - Encourage medical and mental health providers caring for perinatal women to attend continuing education courses on perinatal mental health
- Amends section 383.318 of Florida Statutes to INCLUDE mental health screening and information on perinatal mental health resources (including the public toll-free hotline) to be given by birth centers
- Amends section 395.1053 of Florida Statutes to INCLUDE hospitals that provide birth services to do the following:



- Mental health screening
- Provide information on postpartum mental illness and care/referral resources (including toll-free hotline)

What is the State Legislative Process?

1. **An idea for a law** is drafted into a bill.
The process for having bills drafted varies from state to state. The Office of the Clerk of either body can generally provide guidance in this area.
2. **The bill is introduced** in one or both houses of the legislature.
The legislative process generally requires a bill to be read before the entire body on three separate occasions on three separate days prior to a vote on passage by that particular house. Some states legislatures consider the introduction of the bill to be “1st reading.” Others require the completion of the committee process prior to 1st reading. Still yet, some states require only two readings of a bill. (In modern times, the reading of the bill number or the short title may be considered a “reading of the bill”)
3. **The bill is referred to committee.** (Bills are typically referred to anywhere from 1 to 3 committees. In this instance a bill is said to be single, double or triple referenced.)

If a bill is referred to multiple committees, it will typically flow through “minor committees” first before passing through a major committee such as Judiciary, Finance, or Appropriations. Each committee may consider amendments to the bill.

* At times you may request to, or be invited to testify before a committee. It is wise to prepare your remarks or talking points from which to work. In many instances, written testimony may also be submitted for consideration.

4. **The bill is reported to the floor** for consideration by the entire body.
If a bill completes the committee process, it is reported back to the full body, usually with a recommendation that it pass or that it pass as amended.
5. **The bill is placed upon its adoption** by the full body.
Once before the entire body, there may be another chance for amendments to be offered and debated before a debate on final passage. Each body has its own rules governing amendments and debate. Once in its final form and debate is complete, the membership will vote on passage of the bill.
6. **The Process is repeated in the other chamber.** If adopted by the full body, the bill is then sent to the other chamber where the process is repeated. If the bill is amended in the second chamber, it is returned to the house of origin as amended for their consideration. The house of origin may concur with the amendment(s), concur with a further amendment(s), or refuse to concur. If the two houses do not agree, the bill may be assigned to a conference committee of members of both houses to work out the differences.

7. **Final Approval.**

If a bill is agreed to and completes the process in both chambers, it is then sent to the Governor for approval. The Governor may sign the bill into law, let it become law without his/her signature, or veto the bill and return it to the legislature with an explanation of the objection.

The process by which a bill becomes law is designed to be difficult so that, in theory, only the most well-reasoned and carefully-considered legislation survives. Conversely, the ways in which a bill may die are many. During a given biennium over 200,000 bills are introduced in the states. The vast majority will never be taken up for consideration.

Tips on meeting with your local representative:

Prepare ahead of time

Know exactly who you are meeting with. Know their title and how to address them. Addressing them by their elected title is a good default: Senator Book, Representative Burgess will often suffice.

- Know their additional roles in the process such as committee assignments.
- When possible know their political leanings and policy priorities. (Be wary of voting records as they are often misleading.) It is best to give them the benefit of the doubt that they support our efforts.

Take your Talking Points (see below) with you.

Anticipate Questions

- Members are generally going to want to know three things up front:
 - Who are you?
 - What do you want?
 - What do you want me to do about it?

Never Guess at or Exaggerate Facts

- This is easily seen through.
- Your integrity, once lost, is difficult to recover.
- It is okay to follow up with answers if you don't know on the spot. (Follow up promptly!) "Let me get back with you on that," or "Let me put you in touch with the Florida Maternal Mental Health Collaborative leadership."



Speak in Plain Terms

- Limit the use of acronyms, lingo and jargon commonly that your legislator may not be familiar with. Everyone can't be expected to know what you're talking about and the use of such terms can cause your audience to feel talked down to.

Backup Your Talking Points

- Have statistics and data to support your claims (talking points include this; however, having your local county statistics can be powerful as well.)
- Local stories can help lend a human face to the issue. YOUR story, if applicable will be powerful.

Brevity is important

- Be prepared to summarize your issue in 2 to 3 minutes. That might be all you get.

Draw on Their Expertise

- Ask for advice on your next steps. What will be your hurdles? Who to meet with next etc.?

Avoid Pitfalls

- Stick to your issue; remain focused on SB138 to make the most of your opportunity to specifically impact support for this legislation.

Treat Staff with the Same Respect as the Member

- Staff can be your best ally or your barrier to entry. Pick up a business card if they have one to stay in touch and send a follow-up Thank You.

Have Materials to Leave Behind

- Staff rely heavily on this information when advising their members.
- Meetings routinely get cut short or even canceled. Summary documents are invaluable to members and staff.
- See LAST PAGE for your "LEAVE BEHIND" document (print before going; email it when you send your Thank You follow-up.)

Educate, Educate, Educate

- Get a sense for their general knowledge and walk them through it accordingly.



HOW CAN YOU HELP EDUCATE YOUR LOCAL LEGISLATORS?

Utilize the resources in this toolkit to: CALL, EMAIL, VISIT your local Florida representatives.

Resources to help these activities are below and include:

- Talking points
- “Call your representative” sample script for advocates and parents
- Sample tweets and Facebook posts @yourrepresentative from advocates and parents
 - Follow us on Facebook and Twitter and share the posts
 - Facebook: @FLMomsMatter
 - Twitter handle: @FLMomsMatter
- Fill-in-the-blank news media release
 - This can be customized for your needs
- Customizable letters to the editor
- Links to resources



SAMPLE TALKING POINTS

It is urgent that the Florida Legislature pass SB 138, Florida Families First Act. Each year approximately 40,000 Florida babies are born to parents experiencing a mental illness related to pregnancy and delivery that has the potential to:

- 1 in 5 women in Florida will experience a perinatal mental illness
- Detrimentially affect parent/child bonding
- Put the child at risk for neglect and/or abuse
- Hinder the social, emotional and cognitive development of the child
- Dissolve marriages
- Perinatal mental illnesses are a leading cause of maternal death
- Mental illness is a leading cause for readmission of postpartum women in Florida
- When left unrecognized and untreated, perinatal mental illnesses have a TWO-generation cost estimated to reach \$900 million ANNUALLY in Florida.
- While perinatal mental illnesses are the #1 health complication related to pregnancy and birth, they are currently the least screened and properly treated.
- Florida's costs of health care and insurance would be lowered by addressing perinatal mental health.
- The Florida Families First Act addresses this public health crisis through awareness, education, and toll-free hotlines for consumers AND providers. Additionally, it requires a statewide referral list to be maintained as well as requiring places where mothers give birth to screen and give awareness info and hotline numbers to ALL mothers.



START HERE FIRST:

Find your Florida Senators [here](#) and Florida House Representative [here](#).

Sample phone call scripts

For advocates:

Hello, my name is _____ and I live in _____, Florida. (if applicable) I represent _____ group. (I'm also a Mom, husband, etc.)

I am calling to urge **(FL legislator's name here)** to prioritize SB 138, the Florida Families First Act. In Florida, an estimated 1 in 5 Moms will experience Postpartum Depression and related illness. These illnesses have the potential to prohibit safe parenting practices, impair parent/child bonding, and impede functioning in daily life within the household and returning to work. Postpartum Depression also has correlations to the breakdown of marriages and families. At its' most severe, Postpartum Depression and Postpartum Psychosis have been the cause of Moms taking their lives and the lives of their children.

SB 138 addresses providing information and education for both the public and providers working with perinatal women and their families as well as encouraging continuing education for medical and mental health professionals working with this population. Lastly, it also directs birthing centers and hospitals where women deliver babies to screen for Postpartum Depression and provide the toll-free hotline and resource lists.

Let's connect the dots: the health of parents is the foundation for future generations in Florida. We rely on parents to safely and effectively raise the next generation and be healthy to support the economic impact of communities and our state. Supporting the mental health of parents at this critical season of their lives is imperative.

This is a pro-family economic policy that pays off for generations to come.

Thank you for your time and efforts.



For parents/survivors/family:

Hello, my name is _____ and I live in _____, Florida.

I am calling to let **(insert your Florida legislator's name here)** know how Postpartum Depression (anxiety, etc.) has affected my life (or the life of my loved one): **(discuss some of your story here)**

I've recently been made aware of the growing impact the Florida Families First Act that has been recently introduced. Had I/my loved one known more about risk factors, signs, treatment and support- I/loved one would not have had to suffer in silence, feeling alone.

This opportunity for Florida would change lives and build a stronger foundation for generations to come. I ask that **(Florida representative's name here)** make every effort to support the Florida Families First Act.

Thank you for sharing my personal story with **(Florida representative's name here)**.



SOCIAL MEDIA:

We encourage you to be sure you're following @FLMomsMatter on Facebook and Twitter. We will be sharing great content there and you can 'like' or 'retweet' those posts.

Your post will be most effective if you tag your local Florida senator or representative.

- You can search for your individual Senator or House representative now that you know their names AND/OR "tag" the following:

@FLSenateGOP (Twitter & Facebook handles)

@FLHouseDems (Twitter & Facebook handles)

We suggest using the following hashtags:

#FLMomsMatter

#FLFamiliesFirstAct

Sample Tweets (feel free to get creative and use the hashtags above):

We proudly joined @FLMomsMatter, tell @FLSenateGOP #perinatalmentalhealth matters. Pass #FLFamiliesFirstAct

Dear @FLHouseDems: #FLMomsMatter. Please pass #FLFamiliesFirstAct for healthy parents and kids

Pro-family policy benefits generations to come @FLSenateGOP: Pass and fund #FLFamiliesFirstAct

Postpartum depression should have bipartisan support. Tell @FLHouseDems to act now support #FLFamiliesFirstAct

My family needs #FLFamiliesFirstAct for postpartum depression. @FLSenateGOP



Sample Facebook Post from Advocates and parents:

TAG ELECTED OFFICIAL: We proudly joined the @FLMomsMatter & others to tell **representative's name here** and others to act now #FLFamiliesFirstAct for postpartum depression support & resources. The foundation of families rests on the health of parents. It's good for families, good for states and good for taxpayers. #FLMomsMatter.



Sample Media Release

For Immediate Release

Contact information: NAME, ORG, EMAIL, #

Advocates Call on Florida Legislature to Support SB 138 Florida Families First Act

CITY, STATE- Perinatal mental illnesses are the #1 health complication related to pregnancy and delivery. Florida is poised to address this public health issue for the first time through the Florida Families First Act, SB 138 of 2018.

Our organization supports the passage of SB 138 because....

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About the Florida Maternal Mental Health Collaborative: The FL MMH Collaborative was established in 2016; it includes statewide stakeholders of professionals, advocates and survivors of perinatal mental illnesses. You can learn more by visiting their website at www.flmomsmatter.org



Sample Letters to the Editor

From Advocates

To the Editor:

Senator Lauren Book filed SB 138, the Florida Families First Act on August 11 for the 2018 Legislative Session. The Act directs the Florida Department of Health to establish and maintain a toll-free hotline for parents and direct them to a clearinghouse of local resources. It also provides for a toll-free consultation hotline for medical and mental health providers. Public Service Announcements to spread awareness and decrease stigma are also a part of the proposed legislation. Many professionals working with women and men during pregnancy and after have not received additional education on perinatal mental illnesses; the Act encourages these providers to engage in continuing education opportunities. Lastly, the Act requires both birthing centers and hospitals who deliver babies to do a mental health screening prior to discharge, provide the consumer toll-free hotline and local resource information.

We support this legislation because.....

Sincerely,

NAME, ORGANIZATION

From Parents

Florida needs to address the mental health of parents. I experienced (Postpartum Depression/anxiety, etc.) and was not informed beforehand. I did not know my risk factors and was not screened during pregnancy or after delivery (or whatever is true for specific parent). While I was informed on what to expect for my physical health, I was not informed on what could be possible for my mental health. (put more specific experience here if you choose to...)

With SB 138, parents will be informed on possible mental health complications, better prepare for those outcomes and most importantly have the opportunity to know where resources are located. Parents will have a phone number and resources to connect to; they will know they are not alone and where to find help. Families depend on parents being healthy, The Florida Families First Act (SB 138) is a vital resource for parents.

Sincerely,

NAME



FLORIDA FAMILIES FIRST ACT OF 2018 (SB 138)

The Florida Families First Act of 2018 would provide for consumer and provider education and information on appropriate resources as well as increase and improve screening and referrals for postpartum women. The Act would also encourage medical and mental health providers who work with perinatal women to engage in continuing education.

B A C K G R O U N D

- Perinatal depression and related illnesses take place during pregnancy and after delivery. A woman may feel angry, hopeless, worthless, panicked and unable to connect with her baby.
- It is estimated approximately 1 in 5 Florida Moms will experience perinatal depression or related mental illness.
- Perinatal mental illness can impact parent/child bonding and effects the parents' ability to function in many ways.
- Cognitive, social and emotional outcomes of children are impacted.
- Perinatal mental illnesses are a leading cause of maternal mortality.

K E Y P O I N T S

- 1 in 5 women are affected
- Evidence-based interventions have proven effective.
- SB138 will address information and education for both the public and providers.
- Addressing perinatal mental illnesses benefit generations to come.