

## MAJOR INITIATIVE TO COMBAT POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION TO BE SIGNED INTO LAW AS PART OF HEALTH INSURANCE REFORM

*MOTHERS Act, sponsored by Sen. Menendez, will establish support, educational and research programs*

**WASHINGTON** – Leaders in the fight against postpartum depression are celebrating today as *The Melanie Blocker Stokes MOTHERS Act* – legislation sponsored by U.S. Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ) to combat postpartum depression – will become law as part of landmark health insurance reform that passed Congress last night. The legislation will establish a comprehensive federal commitment to combating postpartum depression through new research, education initiatives and voluntarily support service programs.

“Millions of mothers nationwide who are suffering or will suffer from postpartum depression are among the winners as a result of the new health insurance reform law,” said **Senator Menendez**. “These women understand that postpartum depression is serious and disabling, and that the support structure to help prepare for and overcome it is has been woefully insufficient. We will attack postpartum depression on multiple fronts – with education, support, and research – so that new moms can feel supported and safe rather than scared and alone. I applaud the incredible group of advocates and inspirational women who helped this become a reality, I applaud Rep. Bobby Rush and Senator Richard Durbin for helping to champion this cause, and I am absolutely thrilled that this will be the law of the land.”

“Finally, women all over the county are going to have access to the kinds of support services and information that women in New Jersey have had for a number of years,” said **Mary Jo Codey**, former First Lady of New Jersey and leading advocate in the fight against postpartum depression. And we're going to get more research into these insidious illnesses. This is what I'd worked and hoped for over a long period of time. I almost can't believe it finally happened!”

“We are so indebted to Senator Menendez and everyone on Capitol Hill who recognized that we needed to do so much more to educate women about postpartum depression, to ensure that healthcare providers are able to identify those who suffer, and to provide sufficient resources and services for recovery in every corner of our country,” said Katherine Stone, author of **Postpartum Progress**, the most widely-read blog on postpartum depression and other mental illnesses related to childbirth, and board member of Postpartum Support International. “We needed their help to raise awareness at the federal level and make this a healthcare priority, and they've done just that. There is no doubt that this new legislation will help save the lives of many new mothers and ensure that their families have a healthier start.”

“The American Psychological Association applauds the passage of the MOTHERS Act, which will improve the health and well being of approximately 800,000 women suffering from postpartum depression, included in health care reform legislation. The MOTHERS Act will expand research, outreach and education to mothers, families, and health care professionals on this critical issue,” states Gwendolyn Puryear Keita, PhD, Executive Director, Public Interest Directorate, **American Psychological Association**.

Susan Dowd Stone, Chair President's Advisory Council, **Postpartum Support International** said, “Senator Robert Menendez, you are an unwavering champion of the women and infants you represent. Against all odds, you never once set aside this initiative. You are not just the Senator from New Jersey, you are the Senator of America's mothers.”

Dr. Gerald F. Joseph, President of the **American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists**, applauds Senator Menendez's leadership in ensuring inclusion of the MOTHERS Act in health care reform, saying “This will ensure that women and their health care providers have the best

tools available to identify and treat all women that suffer from the very real and often severe results of postpartum depression."

"Adoption of the MOTHERS Act is a positive development for women and their families," said **American Psychiatric Association** President Alan F. Schatzberg, M.D. "Now the many women who are suffering from postpartum depression will have the support needed to get the help for this treatable condition."

"As a nurse dedicated to caring for expectant mothers and their newborns, I applaud the passage of the MOTHERS Act. This legislation will provide much needed support services and education to women suffering from postpartum depression," said Karen Peddicord, CEO of the **Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses**.

"Midwives are particularly sensitive to the need for support for mothers in the postpartum period and have long advocated for more intensive follow-up for all new mothers. We are so pleased by the passage of the MOTHERS Act which Senator Menendez has championed," stated Melissa Avery, CNM, PhD, FACNM, President of the **American College of Nurse-Midwives**.

"The March of Dimes deeply appreciates the Senator's leadership on this important issue," said Marina L. Weiss, Ph. D, senior vice president of public policy and government affairs for the **March of Dimes**. "Postpartum depression is a serious problem that takes a toll on women and infants as well as on their families. The Senator's proposal, approved by Congress last night, will ensure that necessary resources are made available to promote early diagnosis and treatment of post partum depression. The provision holds great promise for improving birth outcomes for women and children in every state across the nation."

"The passage of The Melanie Blocker Stokes MOTHERS ACT is a gift to countless women who have struggled and continue to struggle with postpartum depression," said Sylvia Lasalandra-Frodella, Legislative Director, **PerinatalPro.com** and author of *A Daughter's Touch*. "The Melanie Blocker Stokes MOTHERS ACT will help all women understand that they no longer have to suffer in shame or silence if she's confronted with feelings of depression following the birth of her newborn. Thank you Senator Robert Menendez, Congressman Bobby Rush, Senator Richard Codey and Mary Jo Codey for all of your dedication, commitment and tenacity to make this bill law!"

## BACKGROUND

Postpartum depression is a serious and disabling condition affecting hundreds of thousands of new mothers each year. The new law will increase federal efforts to combat postpartum depression by:

- Encouraging Health and Human Services (HHS) to coordinate and continue research to expand the understanding of the causes of, and find treatments for, postpartum conditions.
- Encouraging a National Public Awareness Campaign, to be administered by HHS, to increase awareness and knowledge of postpartum depression and psychosis.
- Requiring the Secretary of HHS to conduct a study on the benefits of screening for postpartum depression and postpartum psychosis.
- Creating a grant program to public or nonprofit private entities to deliver or enhance outpatient, inpatient and home-based health and support services, including case management and comprehensive treatment services for individuals with or at risk for postpartum conditions. Activities may also include providing education about postpartum conditions to new mothers and their families, including symptoms, methods of coping with the illness, and treatment resources, in order to promote earlier diagnosis and treatment.

It is estimated that postpartum depression (PPD) affects from 10 to 20 percent of new mothers. In the United States, there may be as many as 800,000 new cases of postpartum conditions each year. The cause of PPD isn't known but changes in hormone levels, a difficult pregnancy or birth, and a family history of depression are considered possible factors.

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