March 25, 2024

The Honorable Sabrina Cervantes
California State Assembly District 58
1021 O Street, Suite 4240
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 1936 (Cervantes) Maternal Mental Health Screenings - Support

Dear Assemblymember Cervantes,

On behalf of the California State Association of Psychiatrists (CSAP), I write in support of AB 1936, which would require one maternal mental health screening to be conducted during pregnancy and one additional screening to be conducted during the first six months of the postpartum period.

Screening for perinatal or postpartum depression or other maternal mental health conditions is the first step to detect potential conditions that may have a negative impact during pregnancy or the postpartum period. Because a verified medical diagnostic test has not yet been developed, obstetric and licensed practitioners rely on screening tools, or questionnaires, for detection purposes.

According to the California Department of Public Health, 1 in 3 pregnant people report experiencing anxiety or depression during or after pregnancy. Currently, state law requires that health plans and insurers develop maternal mental health programs that include screening for maternal mental health disorders at least once during pregnancy or the postpartum period. While this existing framework provides some benefit, condition onset can occur at any time, making it crucial that screenings take place more often and during both the pregnancy and postpartum periods.

AB 1936 provides women and birthing people access to at least one maternal mental health screening during pregnancy and at least one additional screening during the first six months of the postpartum period. In doing so, women and birthing people suffering from maternal mental issues during the perinatal or postpartum periods can receive diagnosis and the ability to seek appropriate treatment.

For these reasons, CSAP is pleased to support AB 1936.

Sincerely,

Paul Yoder
Legislative Advocate

CC: Chair and Members, Assembly Health Committe