



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**OFFICE OF WELLNESS AND RESILIENCE**  
**KE KE'ENA KŪPA'A MAULI OLA**  
**OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**  
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**Testimony in SUPPORT of H.R. 163**  
**DESIGNATING THE MONTH OF MAY AS POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION AWARENESS MONTH IN HAWAII**

Committees on Health and Homelessness  
Wednesday, March 20, 2024, at 10:30am  
State Capitol Conference Room 329 and Videoconference

Chair Della Au Belatti, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi, and members of the Committees:

The Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR) in the Governor's Office **SUPPORTS** H.R.163.

Established through Act 291 (Session Laws of Hawai'i 2022) the overall aim of the OWR is to make Hawai'i a trauma-informed state. OWR is focused on breaking down barriers that impact the physical, social, and emotional well-being of Hawai'i's people. OWR explores avenues to increase access and availability to mental, behavioral, social, and emotional health services and support.

This resolution declares May as Postpartum Depression Awareness Month to raise awareness of the mental condition mothers face. Postpartum depression is a mental condition that is often disregarded, and underdiagnosed. The condition can be debilitating and serious, particularly if left untreated. Research has shown that experiencing childhood trauma can increase a woman's chances of developing postpartum depression and in turn, postpartum depression can have adverse effects on a newborn's childhood outcomes.<sup>1</sup>

The OWR appreciates that H.R. 163 recognizes the disproportionate impacts postpartum depression can have on marginalized communities. There are significant racial and socioeconomic disparities that could be associated with postpartum mental healthcare's outreach, detection, service, and quality.<sup>2</sup> By designating a Postpartum Depression Awareness Month and carrying out an outreach campaign that is individualized to each community, it allows a chance for not only mothers but those around them to realize that postpartum depression is widespread, recognize when one sees postpartum depression symptoms, and respond accordingly to address the challenge and seek support.

Trauma-informed care (TIC) is an approach to understanding and responding to the widespread impact of trauma. By passing this resolution, the State would be upholding the TIC principles of Safety, Peer Support, Empowerment, and Voice and Choice, which strengthens our pathway towards a trauma-informed state. As such, the OWR supports H.R.163.

Mahalo,

Tia L R Hartsock, MSW, MSCJA  
Director, Office of Wellness & Resilience  
Office of the Governor

<sup>1</sup> Karmel W. Choi, Kathleen J. Sikkema, Bavi Vythilingum, Lut Geerts, Sheila C. Faure, Melissa H. Watt, Annerine Roos, Dan J. Stein, Maternal childhood trauma, postpartum depression, and infant outcomes: Avoidant affective processing as a potential mechanism, Journal of Affective Disorders, Volume 211, 2017, Pages 107-115, ISSN 0165-0327, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2017.01.004>.  
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0165032716315233>

<sup>2</sup> Kozhimannil KB, Trinacty CM, Busch AB, Huskamp HA, Adams AS. Racial and ethnic disparities in postpartum depression care among low-income women. Psychiatr Serv. 2011 Jun;62(6):619-25. doi: 10.1176/ps.62.6.pss6206\_0619. PMID: 21632730; PMCID: PMC3733216. [Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Postpartum Depression Care Among Low-Income Women - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)