



**Ellen Story Commission on Postpartum Depression  
Quarterly Meeting - May 10, 2023**

**MEETING MINUTES**

Commissioners present: Rep. Brandy Fluker Oakley (Co-chair), Rep. Kim Ferguson, Rep. Jim O'Day, Lily Stowe-Akeman on behalf of Rep. Mindy Domb, Johanna Wakelin on behalf of Sen. Joan Lovely, Jessie Colbert, Stephanie Crawford, Leena Mittal, Nneka Hall, Rebecca Butler (DOI), Beth Buxton (DPH), Sarah Krinsky (MassHealth), Margarita O'Neill-Arana (DMH), Lauren Almeida (DCF), Divya Kumar, Julie Johnston, Lisa Scarfo, Liz Murphy, Jayne Singer, Tiffany Moore Simas

Commissioners not present: Rep. Carole Fiola, Sen. Liz Miranda (Co-chair), Sen. Becca Rausch, Sen. Bruce Tarr, Sen. John Keenan, Tyreese Nicolas (EEC), Timoria McQueen Saba, Chloe Zera, Jen Gilbert, Lee Cohen, Josh Sparrow, Kerry LaBounty, Karen Garber, Nadja Lopez

Others: Leisha McCaffrey

I. Welcome and Introductions

Coordinator Ashley Healy welcomed commissioners and guests. Ms. Healy announced that the meeting was being conducted pursuant to Open Meeting Law and that the meeting was being recorded and livestreamed through the legislature's website.

The Commission proceeded to roll call. Co-chair Representative Brandy Fluker Oakley introduced herself as the newly appointed House Co-chair for the Ellen Story Commission. Commissioners introduced themselves and the organizations they represent.

The Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes from the 2/15/23 quarterly meeting, with the addition of Commissioner Dr. Lisa Scarfo as having been present at that February meeting.

## II. Legislative Updates

Ms. Healy gave updates on the bills that had been discussed during the February quarterly meeting, that are connected to the Ellen Story Commission's mission. The bills have been given their bill numbers and initial committee assignments. None of them has been scheduled for a hearing yet.

Additionally, Ms. Healy informed commissioners that legislation addressed to serious perinatal psychiatric complications, including postpartum psychosis, had been filed by Commissioner Rep. Jim O'Day and Commissioner Sen. Joan Lovely.

Commissioner Rep. O'Day addressed the Commission and stated that the bill was filed with some changes from last session, including adding recommendations for increased education and notification for expecting parents on perinatal mood disorders and what to watch for. The bill also provides an opportunity for a mother who experienced psychosis and caused great harm or fatality to be treated and for the mental health capacity to be considered in sentencing.

Ms. Healy asked if other commissioners had legislative updates. Commissioner Leena Mittal announced that MCPAP and MCPAP for Moms are seeking expansion of their funding and that Senator Velis would be filing a related budget amendment. Commissioner Mittal expressed a hope that commissioners would advocate in support of the amendment given that a budget increase is needed to right-size the amount of work that MCPAP for Moms is doing currently.

Commissioner Nneka Hall thanked Co-Chair Rep. Fluker Oakley for introducing Amendment #506 for Count the Kicks. Count the Kicks has received some funding from DPH to do a soft launch but the funds do not cover needed translations of materials or the cost of launching a billboard campaign in at-risk communities. Commissioner Hall stated that the decrease in stillbirth rates since 2010 shows that Count the Kicks is making a difference, and invited commissioners to reach out to her to learn more, and to support the line item.

Ms. Healy commented that the Senate budget was released yesterday so amendments may be due by Friday, at which time amendment numbers will be available. Johanna Wakelin of Commissioner Sen. Joan Lovely's office confirmed this timing.

Ms. Healy shared some administrative updates, including where commissioners and members can find up-to-date information on bills relevant to the Commission's mission. On the Commission's website at <https://www.ppdcommission.com/legislative-advocacy>, Ms. Healy keeps a list that includes committee assignments and other information, including a brief description, endorsements if applicable, fact sheets if available.

Ms. Healy also informed the Commission that she maintains a working document with a legislative table that is updated frequently as bills move through the committee process, which she will share with commissioners by email prior to meetings at the same time that agendas and minutes are emailed, rather than taking up too much meeting time giving legislative updates. Ms. Healy also will email commissioners when bills are going before legislative committees for hearings in case commissioners wish to submit written or oral testimony. Ms. Healy asked that commissioners review the legislative table and inform her if there are any bills in which they are particularly interested or that are closely related to their specific areas of expertise, lived experience, or professional experience.

Commissioner Jessie Colbert announced in the meeting chat that that Mind the Gap coalition will be pushing for funding for the Moms Matter Act (H.1984/S.1261) through a Senate budget amendment.

Commissioner Liz Murphy expressed thanks for the legislative tracking and amendment tracking.

### III. Events

#### A. International Bereaved Mothers Day

The Commission discussed the Annual Awareness Day event commemorating International Bereaved Mothers Day that took place at the State House on May 5, 2023. Ms. Healy thanked Commissioner Hall and Commissioner Stephanie Crawford for organizing the event and bringing in an incredible lineup of speakers and vendors for a powerful and moving event that created a very supportive space in which to honor bereaved parents and their children.

Commissioner Hall commented that the event was exhausting, and thanked the commissioners that attended the event. She expressed she was disheartened that there was not better representation from the Commission in attendance.

Commissioner Crawford commented in the meeting chat that it was a lovely event, and thanked everyone who participated.

Co-chair Rep. Fluker Oakley expressed gratitude to Commissioner Hall, Commissioner Crawford, and Ms. Healy for their work on the event. The room had the right temperature in terms of fostering community, honoring the losses and those who have been impacted, providing resources, and networking and making connections. There was a good showing from other legislators in the building.

Commissioner Jayne Singer commented that it was an amazing and important event and expressed gratitude for Commissioner Hall's presence on the Commission. The speakers were incredibly powerful and including fathers in the program was very important in raising awareness about postpartum issues, not just following pregnancy but also following pregnancy loss and child loss.

Commissioner Colbert commented in the meeting chat that it was an excellent program with many wonderful organizations present.

Co-chair Rep. Fluker Oakley expressed thanks in the meeting chat to Commissioner Murphy for volunteering day-of support for the event.

Commissioner Murphy stated that it was a moving day and she was happy to be included. She felt that the room was a comfortable space and that she will be happy to help Commissioner Hall get more attention in the future.

#### B. Maternal Mental Health Month

Ms. Healy reminded commissioners that May is Maternal Mental Health Month and shared related events and resources.

#### C. Future Events

Ms. Healy shared that the Massachusetts chapter of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists would be holding its Awareness Day on Wed. 5/31 at the State House. Commissioner Sen. Joan Lovely and Commissioner Rep. Jim O'Day are being honored, and MA-ACOG will be introducing their legislative priorities for this session. Ms. Healy will share the event agenda with the Commission by email.

Commissioner Colbert announced that Mass. PPD Fund's annual Flourishing event will be held on Saturday, May 13th and that Ms. Healy and her husband will be the keynote speakers. There also will be a wellness practice and raffles, and Commissioner Crawford will be speaking at the outset of the event as well.

Ms. Healy announced that MassHealth will be hosting public online listening sessions on May 17th and July 13th related to their forthcoming doula service program, which is anticipated to launch later this year.

Commissioner Sarah Krinsky commented that doulas can really support families in terms of perinatal mental health. The listening sessions are open to everyone and are online. MassHealth is hoping to have the new doula benefit available by the end of 2023.

Commissioner Singer asked in the meeting chat whether people from outside the state are welcome to attend the listening sessions. Commissioner Krinsky confirmed that they are.

#### IV. Announcements

Co-chair Rep. Fluker Oakley announced that Secretary Xavier Becerra's office reached out to the Commission Co-chairs about a collaboration on a quarterly basis around the Commission's work. The series will be on maternal health generally but we are ensuring that PMH and PMADs are part of the conversation. Ms. Healy will be reaching out to commissioners for input on what we would like the federal government to know about our work as we build this partnership. Ms. Healy will let commissioners know if there is a time commitment required, or other ways they can participate.

Commissioner Mittal announced in the meeting chat that, starting tomorrow, Brigham and Women's Hospital is holding a virtual continuing medical education course entitled Updates in Neurology and Psychiatry in Women, with lots of PMH related content.

#### V. Adjournment