July 21, 2015

The Honorable Katherine Clark  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1721 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ryan Costello  
U.S. House of Representatives  
427 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Clark and Representative Costello:

On behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), a non-profit professional organization of 64,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical subspecialists, I write to offer our support for the Bringing Postpartum Depression Out of the Shadows Act of 2015, legislation that expands awareness, screening, and treatment for postpartum depression.

Every year, more than 400,000 infants are born to mothers who are depressed, making perinatal depression the most underdiagnosed obstetric complication in America. Postpartum depression leads to increased costs of medical care, inappropriate medical care, child abuse and neglect, discontinuation of breastfeeding, family dysfunction, and adversely affects early brain development.¹

The AAP recognizes the adverse impact maternal depression can have on the infant and the importance of addressing maternal depression in a timely, proactive manner in order to ensure the well-being of the mother and the healthy development of the infant. Pediatricians, by virtue of having a longitudinal relationship with families, have a unique opportunity to identify maternal depression and help prevent untoward developmental and mental health outcomes for the infant and family. The Bringing Postpartum Depression Out of the Shadows Act of 2015 would ensure that primary care providers like pediatricians have the appropriate training and resources to identify postpartum depression and to refer mothers to suitable resources and treatment.

The AAP appreciates your commitment to the identification and treatment of postpartum depression and is pleased to support the Bringing Postpartum Depression Out of the Shadows Act of 2015. We look forward to continuing to work with you to improve the health of all our nation’s children. If you have any questions feel free to contact Tamar Magarik Haro in our Washington, DC office at tharo@aap.org or 202-347-8600.

Sincerely,

Sandra G. Hassink, MD, FAAP
President