

January 18, 2024

The Honorable Jill Biden, First Lady  
Carolyn Mazure, Chair, White House Initiative on Women's Health Research  
The White House  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Dr. Biden and Dr. Mazure,

As organizations focused on women's health, we greatly appreciate your commitment to women's health research and to closing health disparities for women nationwide.

As you launch your new Initiative, we sincerely hope you will include additional research around mental health and its impact on women's health more broadly. The impact of mental illness is immense: [one in five U.S. women](#) are currently experiencing mental illness, such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or an eating disorder.

**As with nearly any disease, women experience mental illness and its impacts differently than men.** Disparity gaps are amplified in mental health and occur throughout the lifespan. Research shows that [women are twice as likely](#) to experience generalized anxiety disorder – and yet, [women are less likely to report](#) receiving mental health treatment when they need it. People of color in the United States are [less likely](#) to receive necessary mental health care. Coupled with a lack of cultural understanding by clinicians, these gaps are exacerbated by underdiagnosis and misdiagnosis of mental illness.

Further, maternal mental health is a unique threat to women, [affecting one in five women](#) during pregnancy or postpartum — yet many go [undiagnosed or untreated](#). Major hormonal changes, like those during pregnancy or menopause, are also shown to [impact mental health](#). These women-specific mental health challenges are under-researched, and must be prioritized in future activities and initiatives.

Women deserve care that meets them where they are. **As a result, additional research is critical. An increased understanding of the unique experiences of women living with mental illness, women's-specific mental illnesses, and how mental health disparities can decrease would improve the health of countless women.**

The Alliance for Women's Health and Prevention (AWHP) and Healthy Women are working collaboratively to address the mental health challenges women face. We are committed to the belief that mental health must be treated with equal commitment as physical health. **Given our shared commitment to equitable women's healthcare, we are thrilled by the launch of the Initiative and look forward to working together to expand research and improve outcomes.**

Please don't hesitate to reach out AWHP's CEO Millicent Gorham ([mgorham@womenshealthandprevention.org](mailto:mgorham@womenshealthandprevention.org)) and Healthy Women's CEO Elizabeth Battaglino ([beth@healthywomen.org](mailto:beth@healthywomen.org)) if we can be of any help in the process or if you have any questions. Once again, thank you for your attention to this important issue, and we hope that you will leverage your position to advocate for research that will support the health and wellbeing of all women.

Sincerely,



**Millicent Gorham**  
CEO, AWHP



**Elizabeth Battaglino**  
CEO, HealthyWomen