



October 1, 2024

The Honorable Brice Wiggins
Chairman
Senate Judiciary A Committee
Capitol Room 409

The Honorable Hob Bryan
Chairman
Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee
Capitol Room 212-E

The Honorable Joey Hood
Chairman
House Judiciary A Committee
Capitol Room 112-E

The Honorable Sam Creekmore IV
Chairman
House Public Health and Human Services
Committee
Capitol Room 104-A

Via Electronic Mail and Hand Delivery

Re: Mississippi Access to Maternal Assistance (“MAMA”) Update Pursuant to S.B. 2781 (2023)

Dear Chairmen Wiggins, Bryan, Hood, and Creekmore:

Pursuant to S.B. 2781, I am delighted to provide this report to you on the successful development and deployment of the Mississippi Access to Maternal Assistance, or “MAMA,” website and mobile application (“app”), as well as the operation and status of this project. This initiative has been a significant achievement for our office and our state, and I would like to highlight the key aspects of its success.

Background

Senate Bill 2781, enacted on July 1, 2023, established MAMA to be overseen by the Attorney General’s Office. The bill required the Department of Information Technology Services (“ITS”) to develop, implement, and manage a website and app coordinating and promoting information and services related to pregnancy, childbirth, and care for dependent children, for expectant mothers and new parents. The bill provided that the website and app shall include, but not be limited to, “comprehensive information and resources related to adoption assistance, child care, domestic abuse protection, early intervention, food, clothing

and supplies related to pregnancy and newborn care, job training and placement, unemployment benefits, paternity, parenting skills, mental health, and prenatal and postpartum care provided by the State of Mississippi or any other governmental entity, or relevant nonprofit organizations, including religious institutions.” Miss. Code Ann. § 41-143-1(2). The following agencies and entities were responsible for providing responsive information to the Attorney General’s Office for the app and website:

- (a) Mississippi State Department of Health,
- (b) Mississippi Department of Human Services,
- (c) Mississippi Department of Mental Health,
- (d) Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services,
- (e) Mississippi Office of Workforce Development,
- (f) Mississippi Department of Employment Security, and
- (g) Mississippi Division of Medicaid.

Miss. Code Ann. § 41-143-1(1). The law required the website to be operational by October 1, 2023, and the app to be operational by January 1, 2024. Miss. Code Ann. § 41-143-1(5).

Given the tight turnaround required by the law, as well as the lack of new funding, the cooperation of our partner agencies was paramount to successfully meeting these deadlines. All these agencies, as well as others whose assistance we sought in standing up this project, demonstrated a commitment to the success of MAMA and were helpful in providing data to help populate the website by its launch one year ago today. In particular, ITS went above and beyond to help us create this website and app from scratch with remarkable alacrity.

Current Status

Our goal was to create a user-friendly, centralized, and efficient platform that connects those in need with public, private, and faith-based resources available in three clicks or less. We were able to achieve that goal in the development stage, not only identifying hundreds of statewide services for mothers and families, but also verifying their offerings.

Since their timely launch, the website and app have been well-received. The website has had over 15,000 active users since its inception last year, and the app has been downloaded nearly five hundred times in just nine months. There are already over four hundred resources listed, and my office continues outreach to add more on a regular basis. User feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with many praising the website’s and app’s ease of use and convenience.

The MAMA website has received three technology awards, the Communicator Award – General-Government, Distinction; the Horizon Interactive Award – Bronze; and the dotComm Awards – Platinum. More importantly, MAMA has become a beacon of success and hope nationally. March for Life highlighted MAMA in its theme reveal last year, “With every woman, for every child,” as an example of how Mississippi is rising up to support women in their most

vulnerable time. Additionally, the Notre Dame Vita Institute offered MAMA as a model for other states and organizations in the pro-life movement to follow. Mississippi has become a model for others to follow.

While it has been an honor to share MAMA with groups around the state and the country, it has also been critical to the project's success. We have spoken to healthcare professionals, lawyers, judges, educators, general service providers, and others about the many ways people can benefit from MAMA, how their information and services can be added to the website and app, and how they can share this resource with those in need. My office created the attached [palm card](#) and has distributed thousands of them to community mental health centers, health clinics, churches, domestic violence shelters, food pantries, and other places where women in need may find them and discover this resource.

I am most excited by the anecdotal evidence of the substantial impact MAMA is making. On average, my office hears from about four women a week directly through the Contact Us feature on the website and app. While our resources are limited, my team has been able to assist women across our state and, in most instances, connect them directly to the help those women were seeking. Some examples include:

- Connecting a single, first-time mom of twins in the NICU, at risk of homelessness, with a crisis pregnancy center to find housing for herself and her new babies;
- Helping a pregnant mother of two keep her kids out of foster care by working with community organizations to host a baby shower and provide essential family care items she needed to welcome her child into this world;
- Helping a special needs mother, who is also raising her grandchild, who needed help applying for food benefits and Medicaid;
- Helping a pregnant mother who needed assistance applying for Medicaid so that she could access prenatal care;
- Helping one mother find financial assistance for rent, another mother find help paying utility bills, and another make a needed connection for food and clothing;
- Locating a donated toddler bed for an expectant mother from a nearby church community;
- Helping a pregnant woman nearing her delivery date that needed immediate assistance finding shelter; and
- Providing a listening ear for a 36-week pregnant mother who was looking for someone to walk alongside her in her new journey to motherhood.

There is no denying that MAMA has been able to stand in the gap for and empower women who, despite their personal challenges, desire to be good moms. It is clear the streamlined, convenient connection between women in need and service providers around the state has given women dignity, support, and autonomy in their very individual motherhood journeys.

We are proud of Mississippi's efforts to show that we can both empower women and promote life, and we are committed to the ongoing improvement and expansion of MAMA. Thus, we are truly thankful that the Legislature invested \$150,000 this year for its continued success. We will use these funds to build on this strong foundation during this fiscal year.

When families thrive, Mississippi thrives, and MAMA can help ensure both. We thank you for your investment in and attention to the health and wellbeing of our women and children and look forward to continuing our work together to serve even more families in our state. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Abby Overby of my office, at abby.overby@ago.ms.gov or 601-359-3094.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lynn Fitch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lynn" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Fitch".

Lynn Fitch
Attorney General
State of Mississippi

Enclosure