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**HB 0044**

February 28, 2023

**TO:** Members of the House Judiciary Committee

**FROM:** Nina Themelis, Interim Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

**RE:** House Bill 044 – Pregnant Incarcerated Individuals – Substance Use Disorder Assessment and Treatment

**POSITION: Support**

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Moon, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (HB) 044.

**HB 044** will improve access to healthcare services, screening for substance use disorder (SUD), and linkage to insurance coverage among incarcerated pregnant individuals. Enhancement of these protocols can directly correlate to improved pregnancy outcomes for mother and child. Pregnant individuals require specific and timely healthcare services and considerations. The period of incarceration presents an opportune time to evaluate and treat these women and their children-to-be.

Drug use and SUD are highly prevalent among the female population in detention centers, with as high as 25 percent of the overall population being pregnant or postpartum within the past year. Access to high-quality services is critical. Studies of pregnancy outcomes among women prisoners have “demonstrated high rates of perinatal mortality and morbidity.”<sup>1</sup> Improvement of specialized healthcare provision can improve this reality.

Continuation of these services after release is critical. Research shows that uninsured women “receive fewer prenatal care services than their insured counterparts and report greater difficulty in obtaining the care that they believe they need.”<sup>2</sup> This bill will support the arrangement of health insurance coverage and follow-up care post release.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on **HB 044**. The BCA believes this legislation is a win-win for all parties involved. Thus, we urge this committee to report on HB 044 favorably, and help ensure healthcare access to pregnant incarcerated individuals.

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<sup>1</sup> Kristine Siefert, PhD, ACSW, Sheryl Pimlott, ACSW, Improving Pregnancy Outcome during Imprisonment: A Model Residential Care Program, Social Work, Volume 46, Issue 2, April 2001, Pages 125–134, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/46.2.125>

<sup>2</sup> Institute of Medicine (US) Committee on the Consequences of Uninsurance. Health Insurance is a Family Matter. Washington (DC): National Academies Press (US); 2002. 6, Health-Related Outcomes for Children, Pregnant Women, and Newborns. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK221019/>

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