

February 6, 2020

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401



Senate Bill 255 (Correctional Services – Pregnant Incarcerated Individuals – Substance Abuse Assessment and Treatment) - FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Smith and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee members,

Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition (BHRC), an advocacy organization that mobilizes community members for the health, dignity, and safety of people targeted by the war on drugs and anti- sex worker policies, supports Senate bill 255, also known as the Pregnant Incarcerated Continuity of Care Act.

SB255 will ensure that pregnant people who use drugs are able to access life-saving medications during and after their period of incarceration, and access to health insurance and social support upon release.

Already a vulnerable population, pregnant individuals have healthcare needs that are minimally met by prison systems. For those who use opioids, acute opioid withdrawal is physiologically stressful on the pregnant person as well as the fetus. Further, **overdose is the number one cause of death for pregnant and postpartum women in Maryland, and risk of overdose is especially high after a period of incarceration.** Treatment with an opioid agonist, such as methadone or buprenorphine, improves pregnancy outcomes for women who use opioids, provides some protection from overdose, and offers an opportunity to build relationships with health and social service providers.

BHRC respectfully requests the Committee give this measure a favorable report. Thank you for your consideration.

For more information about BHRC or this position, please contact Tricia Christensen at Tricia@BaltimoreHarmReduction.org.