



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: House Bill 524 - Correctional Services - Pregnant Incarcerated Individuals - Substance Abuse Assessment and Treatment

SPONSOR: Delegates W. Fisher, *et al.*

HEARING DATE: February 11, 2020

COMMITTEE: Judiciary

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS House Bill 524 - Correctional Services - Pregnant Incarcerated Individuals - Substance Abuse Assessment and Treatment** which requires pregnant incarcerated individuals be screened for substance use disorder and pregnancy at intake. If both tests are positive, the pregnant incarcerated individual must be referred immediately to a behavioral health care provider and a reproductive health care provider. The correctional unit must ensure that the individual continues to receive or is offered medication treatment for opioid use disorder if warranted.

Pregnancy and incarceration are both high-risk times for individuals suffering from substance use disorders. Experiencing withdrawal as a substance-dependent pregnant woman can lead to significant complications, including reduced placenta function, preterm labor, stunted growth, fetal convulsions, and fetal death.¹ In addition, Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome occurs when an infant becomes addicted to opioids or other drugs used during pregnancy which can result in withdrawal symptoms such as tremors, fever, diarrhea, seizures, and difficulty feeding.² In 2018, there were 195 substance-exposed newborn (SEN) referrals to the Department of Social Services in Prince George's County, a 91% increase from 2015 (102 referrals).³ It is in the best interest of both the mother and the fetus to ensure detoxification or

¹Kaltenbach K, et al. *Obstet Gynecol Clin North Am* (1998).

²Ko JY, et al. *MMWR* (2017).

³Note: Not all SEN have NAS, but a subset of SEN will have NAS. Data provided by the Prince George's County Department of Social Services.

medically assisted treatment occur under the direction of an obstetrician and a behavioral health provider specializing in substance use disorder.

Legislation passed last session requires medication assisted treatment for opioid addiction be available in jails, but will not be fully implemented state-wide until January, 2023. **HB 524** would require implementation of services more quickly for pregnant women. As a priority population with increased health risks, pregnant incarcerated women should be able to access these critical services as soon as possible.

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS House Bill 524** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.