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MAYOR

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HB 524

February 11, 2020

TO: Members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Nicholas Blendy, Deputy Director of Government Relations

RE: House Bill 524 – Correctional Services – Pregnant Incarcerated Individuals – Substance Abuse Assessment and Treatment

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 524.

The United States accounts for only 4% of the global female population, but 30% of the world's female incarcerated population.¹ According to a study published in 2019 by the American Journal of Public Health, 4% of the sample population women newly admitted to prison reported being pregnant, and of the sample incarcerated women 753 had live births, 46 miscarriages, 11 abortions, four stillbirths, and three newborn deaths in a single year.² According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics in 2004, only 54% of pregnant women in prison reported receiving some form of pregnancy care while incarcerated.³

In Maryland, from 1980 to 2015, the number of women in jail increased by 462%, and the number of women in prison increased by 264% during the same period.⁴ In 2015, the total population of women in Maryland prisons was estimated to be 868 female

¹ Prison Policy Initiative 2018, <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/global/women/2018.html>.

² "Pregnancy Outcomes in US Prisons, 2016-2017," Sufrin et. al., 2019. <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/10.2105/AJPH.2019.305006>.

³ "Medical problems of prisoners." Maruschak LM. 2008. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/mpp.pdf>

⁴ "Maryland: Incarceration in Local Jails and State Prisons". 2019. Vera Institute of Justice. <https://www.vera.org/downloads/pdfdownloads/state-incarceration-trends-maryland.pdf>

residents.⁵ Given the number of pregnant incarcerated women in Maryland, there are important opportunities to enhance this vulnerable population's maternal/prenatal health care.

Providing an avenue for pregnant women to undergo screening is critical to the health of both the woman and the fetus. It allows medical professionals to address the underlying health needs and ensure delivery of needed medications and services in a timely fashion. This bill will help improve the health of Maryland residents by providing these vital screenings and services.

We respectfully request a **favorable** report on House Bill 255.

⁵ "The Gender Divide: Tracking Women's State Prison Growth". Sawyer 2018. Prison Policy Initiative. https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/women_overtime.html