

Pregnant Incarcerated Continuity of Care Act – Joanna Morganelli

HB 524 – PREGNANT INCARCERATED CONTINUITY OF CARE ACT

POSITION: SUPPORT

My name is Joanna Morganelli, and I am a recent graduate of Towson University with a degree in Political Science and Women and Gender Studies. **I am submitting testimony in support of House Bill 524 – Pregnant Incarcerated Continuity of Care Act.**

It is easy to ignore incarcerated people. Already physically removed from society through the windowless prison walls, turning a blind eye to an already vulnerable population is something that people do every day, often without meaning to. Ignoring this (unfortunately) growing population and their needs does nothing to help them inside or out of the prison walls. Incarcerated people, especially pregnant ones, have unique health needs that are being neglected and ignored. Once an incarcerated individual is released from prison, they are left to fend for themselves in a world that is constantly changing and working against them. It is increasingly difficult to access healthcare, and even harder to pay for it without insurance; indeed, upon release, most incarcerated folks do not have any form of health insurance. In the United States, the price of giving birth without insurance ranges between \$10,000 and \$30,000, a sum few people are able to afford. This bill would ensure that upon release, inmates would be able to have access to necessary reproductive health care.

This bill will do more than provide pregnant individuals health care; it will provide the first integral stepping stones back into society, and allow formerly incarcerated people to do so with dignity. By ensuring continuity of care, the recently released inmates will be able to receive pre-natal testing, thereby allowing them to bring their child into this world in a peaceful and healthy way, which impacts health and well-being for the entire life course. This will not only help to decrease pregnancy complications, but it will decrease substance abuse and will provide necessary support during this critical period of time.

The Pregnant Incarcerated Continuity of Care Act will help thousands of individuals who have high risk pregnancies due to their social or economic issues, which are often deeply tied to why they were incarcerated in the first place. The Pregnant Incarcerated Continuity of Care Act will not only help to break the cycle of incarceration, but also assist in breaking cyclical poverty and health disparities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Joanna Morganelli Towson University, Class of 2019