



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Senator Jill P. Carter**

**In Favor of SB759 Correctional Services – Pregnancy and Postpartum Support (Prevention of Forced Infant Separation Act)**

**Before the Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**on March 8, 2023**

**Chair Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee:**

- **Senate Bill 759 will establish space at the upcoming pre-release facility for women who give birth while incarcerated to remain with their newborn up to one-year post-partum. This bill will also establish a Healthy Start Bonding Program to facilitate relationships between mothers and their children.**
- **In the House, this seems to be the biggest concern among the Judiciary Committee, so I think this really should be emphasized. This bill will house women and their babies at the upcoming pre-release facility. While the pre-release is yet to be built, with a new Governor we are hopeful that DPSCS will avoid delaying this process any further and finally begin construction. It is critical that we pass this bill now, to ensure that space is designated for women and their babies as the construction process happens.**

- **This is a far better alternative than to wait until the facility is built and then have to go back and create even more space for a new program. Similarly, there may be concerns as to the cost of the program (in the Fiscal and Policy Note it says this program will substantively increase DPSCS expenditures and present a significant cost). According to the analyst that wrote the Fiscal and Policy Note (our witnesses spoke to him), all costs over \$100k are defined as significant. \$100k is pennies compared to the \$1B+ DPSCS budget). At least 16 other states operate some form of a prison nursery program. These programs typically have operating costs in the low hundreds of thousands of dollars. This cost is well worth the benefit that will come to mothers and their babies.**
- **In 2020, seventeen (17) pregnant women were sentenced to DPSCS facilities, and there were eleven (11) live births. Women are being separated from their babies as we wait. We cannot wait to tackle this issue until a pre-release facility is built.**
- **An extensive body of scientific evidence shows the benefits of keeping women and their babies together. This includes breastfeeding, neurological development, skin-to-skin contact, and improved immune systems.**

**For these reasons, I urge a favorable report of SB759.**

**Sincerely,**



**Jill P. Carter, Esq.**