
Planned Parenthood of Maryland

Committee: House Judiciary Committee

Bill number: HB 523 - Correctional Services - Pregnancy and Postpartum Support
(Prevention of Forced Infant Separation Act)

Hearing Date: February 21, 2023

Position: Support

Planned Parenthood of Maryland (PPM) supports *HB 523 - Correctional Services - Pregnancy and Postpartum Support (Prevention of Forced Infant Separation Act)*. The bill would permit an incarcerated person who is either pregnant or recently gave birth to transfer to the prerelease unit and will establish the Healthy Start Bonding Program to promote the development of healthy relationships between incarcerated parents and their children.

PPM supports this measure because the forced separation of infants leads to a variety of adverse health outcomes for both the baby and the parent. Research suggests that the first year is one of the most important in an infant's life, as it is a time of significant physical, cognitive, and social development.¹ When babies are forcibly separated from their parents just days after birth, there can be lifelong developmental consequences. Not only does separation immediately cause a permanent increase in a baby's stress levels, but separated babies are more likely to develop post-traumatic stress and substance use disorders as adults.² People separated from their newborns are more likely to experience post-partum depression, extreme powerlessness, grief, and feelings of detachment after forced separation.³

It is in nobody's best interest to separate infants and parents so soon after birth. We ask for a favorable report. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net or (443) 926-3443.

¹ <https://www.uofmhealth.org/health-library/hw251065>.

² <https://theconversation.com/a-sudden-and-lasting-separation-from-a-parent-can-permanently-alter-brain-development-98542>.

³ [https://www.jognn.org/article/S0884-2175\(15\)33973-3/pdf](https://www.jognn.org/article/S0884-2175(15)33973-3/pdf)