



Committee: Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Bill: Senate Bill 71 - Correctional Services - Pregnancy and Postpartum Support (Prevention of Forced Infant Separation Act)

Hearing Date: February 7, 2024

Position: Support

The Maryland Affiliate of the American College of Nurse Midwives (ACNM) supports *Senate Bill 71 - Correctional Services - Pregnancy and Postpartum Support (Prevention of Forced Infant Separation Act)*. The bill will would permit an incarcerated woman who is either pregnant or recently gave birth to transfer to the prerelease unit for women. It also establishes the Healthy Start Bonding Program to promote the development of healthy relationships between incarcerated women and their children.

Currently, newborns born to incarcerated mothers in Maryland are separated from their mothers almost immediately and the baby is placed with a secondary caregiver or into the foster system. This outdated practice is well-documented as traumatic for both mothers and babies; children are more likely to experience poor attachment to their caregiver and later academic difficulties, post-traumatic stress symptoms, delinquency, and risky behaviors.¹ This bill establishes a program to stop this outdated and harmful separation policy. Instead, policies will be guided by the evidence-based Healthy Start Bonding Program, which has been developed with maternal-child health experts to support healthy parenting, attachment, and supportive family ties.

We ask for a favorable report on this legislation. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net or (443) 926-3443.

¹ Dallaire. Children with incarcerated mothers: Developmental outcomes, special challenges and recommendations. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*. 2007;28(1):15-24.