

**Testimony before House Judiciary Committee
February 27, 2024**

**House Bill 191 - Correctional Services - Pregnancy and Postpartum Support
Prevention of Forced Infant Separation Act
SUPPORT**

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers, Maryland Chapter (NASW-MD) Forensics Committee, we would like to express our support for House Bill 191 - Correctional Services - Pregnancy and Postpartum Support (Prevention of Forced Infant Separation Act).

Maternal infant bonding occurs primarily through the first year of a baby's life. During this period, the baby and mother begin to feel a strong attachment with each other and attachment promotes healthy growth and development. Eye to eye contact provides meaningful communication making it critical for bonding to occur in the first months. This is the initial and deepest bond.

Research has proven that bonding ensures that a helpless infant receives their primary needs. Early social experiences of infants can strengthen growth of the brain and can have an enduring influence in the ability to form stable relationships with others. When bonding is well established, children are more secure in attachments and are better in entering healthy relationships with others. This increases stability throughout one's life.

Bonding gives babies a source of security and self-esteem and we support giving women who are incarcerated and their newborns the chance to achieve this in child's first year.

We urge a favorable report on House Bill 191.

Respectfully submitted,

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