



Committee: House Judiciary Committee

Bill Number: House Bill 837 – Task Force to Study Forced Infant Separation From Incarcerated Individuals

Hearing Date: February 18, 2025

Position: Support

The Maryland Affiliate of the American College of Nurse Midwives (ACNM) strongly supports *House Bill 837 – Task Force to Study Forced Infant Separation From Incarcerated Individuals*. The bill creates a task force that will make legislative recommendations regarding methods to reduce forced infant separation in the State and facilitate bonds between postpartum incarcerated individuals and their children.

ACNM supports keeping mothers and their infants together after birth. Evidence supports immediate, undisturbed skin-to-skin care after vaginal birth and during and after cesarean surgery for all medically stable mothers and newborns, regardless of feeding preference; and, no routine separation during the days after birth.ⁱ

We have examples in other states. Minnesota lawmakers passed the Healthy Start Act in 2021. It is believed the state is the first to allow some mothers to live outside of prison with their new babies. A handful of other states, including Indiana and Washington, have nurseries that let incarcerated mothers keep their babies with them inside prison.ⁱⁱ Minnesota's program has been so successful that their Department of Corrections is trying to increase the number of participants.

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.

ⁱ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6503901/>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.npr.org/2023/11/21/1213742902/a-novel-prison-program-for-pregnant-women-and-their-babies>