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WOMEN LEGISLATORS OF MARYLAND
THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

February 10, 2025

To: Delegate Luke Clippinger, Chair
Delegate J. Sandy Bartlett, Vice Chair
Judiciary Committee

On behalf of the Maryland Women's Caucus, we are pleased to express our strong support for HB837: Task Force to Study Forced Infant Separation From Incarcerated Individuals. This critical legislation establishes a task force to study and make recommendations regarding methods to reduce forced infant separation in Maryland and facilitate bonds between postpartum incarcerated individuals and their children.

The bond between a mother and child is fundamental to a child's emotional, psychological, and developmental well-being. When infants are separated from their mothers at birth due to incarceration, the impact can be long-lasting and detrimental. Research consistently shows that early bonding plays a crucial role in healthy development, and the disruption of this connection can lead to challenges in attachment, emotional regulation, and overall mental health for both the child and the mother.

Maryland women and families deserve policies that recognize the importance of these early life connections. HB837 takes a compassionate and research-driven approach to addressing this issue by bringing together experts and stakeholders to explore alternative practices that prioritize the well-being of children while maintaining the integrity of the justice system. The task force's findings will provide valuable insight into how Maryland can implement humane, effective solutions that support incarcerated individuals in maintaining family bonds, ultimately benefiting the broader community.

This legislation is a necessary step toward promoting family unity, enhancing maternal mental health, and giving children the best possible start in life, regardless of their parents' circumstances. By prioritizing this issue, Maryland will join other states in recognizing the importance of early childhood bonding and ensuring that children are not unjustly impacted by parental incarceration.

We respectfully urge the Judiciary Committee to issue a favorable report for HB837. Supporting this bill is an investment in the well-being of Maryland's children, families, and communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We appreciate your commitment to policies that strengthen Maryland families and promote a more just and compassionate society.