

RE: Providing Alternatives Through Healing for Justice-Involved Individuals (PATH) Act
SB0138
HB0084

Chair, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

My story is one of many that shows the ripple effects of incarceration on children. My mother was a teenage parent who carried unhealed trauma from an abusive childhood. She turned to drugs to cope. When she lost custody of my sister and me, her addiction and incarceration only deepened. In the 1980s, courtrooms saw her as just another Black “junkie,” not as a woman, not as a mother, and not as someone in need of healing.

Because of her struggles, she was in and out of my life until I was 15. I still remember the first time I saw her in handcuffs. That image has never left me. My father and grandmother did their best to raise me, but the absence was always there. I grew up wrestling with trust, abandonment, and behavioral challenges. Even after my mother found sobriety, our relationship remained strained.

At 16, I was incarcerated myself, carrying both her unhealed pain and my own. Despite my anger, I longed for her to be my hero. Drugs and incarceration robbed us of that bond. When she died, I realized too late how much of her pain I had never truly seen.

My healing journey has taught me to humanize her—not just as my mother, but as a woman who endured unimaginable trauma. That pain became my purpose.

For more than 25 years, I have worked with at-risk and justice-impacted individuals in schools and community programs. In 2024, I founded Mavrik Village, which provides permanent, affordable housing for formerly incarcerated individuals, because I know that stability, dignity, and compassion are the foundations of resilience.

Children like me carry the invisible weight of a mother’s incarceration. It is not only women who suffer. It is their children, their families, and entire communities. Without intervention, the cycle of trauma continues.

The PATH Act offers one such intervention. By creating trauma-informed alternatives and addressing the root causes of women’s incarceration, it recognizes that healing—not punishment alone—creates safer communities. If policies like this had existed for my mother, my childhood—and many others—might have looked very different. Passing the PATH Act is not only about helping women heal. It is about breaking generational cycles and building healthier communities for all of us.

Thank you
Waunita A. Scott
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