



National Association of Social Workers

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DATE: February 28, 2011

TO: Senate Judiciary Committee

RE: In Support of S – 0165.

Healthy Pregnancies for Incarcerated Women Act

On behalf of the Rhode Island Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, I am writing in support of Senate bill number 165, which will prohibit the usage of shackles on pregnant incarcerated women. We believe that a woman's health, especially during her pregnancy, supersedes the small chance a woman would escape from prison. There are a variety of health risks to the mother and the baby if the woman is shackled during pregnancy and/or labor. These include:

- Inability for the mother to switch positions during contractions
- Inability for the mother to be mobile during pregnancy and during labor
- Inefficiency of moving the mother to the operating room in the case of an emergency C-section
- Possibility of brain injury if the baby is not delivered immediately in the case of an emergency C-section
- Inefficient recovery period for the mother because she will not be able to move

Shackling pregnant women is not only harmful to their health but is also known to be very humiliating. There have been stories where women have been shackled during labor, and only let free while actually giving birth. Right after the baby is born many women are shackled up once again, and a guard may stand by to keep watch. There is a very small chance that any woman would be able to walk away and escape so quickly after giving birth.

With the passing of bill S-0165, incarcerated pregnant woman will no longer need to be shackled. This will decrease health risks and humiliation for these women.

Sincerely,
Cassandra Menz
NASW- RI Representative