



## **HB0677 - Correctional Services - Immigration Detention - Prohibition (Dignity Not Detention Act)**

Presented to the Honorable Luke Clippinger and Members of the House Judiciary Committee

February 25, 2020 1:00 p.m.

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### **POSITION: SUPPORT**

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland **urges the House Judiciary Committee a favorable report on HB0677 - Correctional Services - Immigration Detention - Prohibition (Dignity Not Detention Act)**, sponsored by Delegate Vaughn Stewart.

Our organization advocates for reproductive health, rights, and justice. As part of our efforts to protect reproductive freedom for all Marylanders, we work to ensure every childbearing individual has the right to decide if, when, and how to form one's family, and to parent in good health, in safety, and with dignity. We know that individuals have improved opportunities of good perinatal health when given access to timely healthcare, safe living conditions, and reasonable accommodations, and believe an immigration status does not strip an individual of their rights to positive pregnancy outcome.

Under the Trump/Pence Administration, Immigrations and Customs Enforcement has detained tens of thousands of undocumented immigrants.<sup>1</sup> As a result of this administration's cruel and inhumane policy, hundreds of pregnant people have suffered immigration detention, some of whom have in turn suffered miscarriages.<sup>2</sup> To guarantee pregnant immigrants' basic human rights to carry their pregnancies to term with dignity, we must divest from privatized detention centers in Maryland.

Pregnancy is a complicated time in one's life, and systems of detainment and incarceration are not built to support pregnant individuals. As recently as last year, a pregnant inmate in Jessup, Maryland, was kept in restrictive housing, depressed and alone during the final weeks of her pregnancy.<sup>3</sup> Though national incarceration rates of women are rising,<sup>4</sup> structures for detaining and incarcerating pregnant individuals are not evolving quickly enough. In the last three years, the Maryland General Assembly has passed the first laws in the nation requiring pregnancy-related healthcare policies be established in writing and banning solitary confinement of pregnant inmates and detainees. Given the troubled history of incarceration of pregnant individuals in Maryland, we cannot guarantee the reproductive rights of pregnant detainees in private facilities. HB0677 will further the momentum of reproductive justice to protect the rights of pregnant undocumented immigrants. To prevent incarceration of pregnant individuals during this tumultuous time in their lives and to promote healthy pregnancy outcomes, we must make a firm commitment to protecting reproductive rights for all Marylanders, regardless of their immigration status. For these reasons, NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland **urges a favorable committee report on HB0677**. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> Aleaziz, Hamed. "More Than 52,000 People Are Now Being Detained By ICE, An Apparent All-Time High." BuzzFeed News, May 20, 2019. <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/hamedaleaziz/ice-detention-record-immigrants-border>.

<sup>2</sup> "Pregnant and Detained." All Things Considered. National Public Radio, April 6, 2018. <https://www.npr.org/2018/04/05/599802820/pregnant-and-detained>

<sup>3</sup> "Pregnant, Locked Up, and Alone." All Things Considered. National Public Radio, June 19, 2019. <https://www.npr.org/2019/06/16/732109546/pregnant-locked-up-and-alone>

<sup>4</sup> Sawyer, Wendy. "The Gender Divide: Tracking Women's State Prison Growth." Prison Policy Initiative, January 9, 2018. [https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/women\\_overtime.html](https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/women_overtime.html)