



Senator Will Smith, Chair
Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

SENATE BILL 776

Pregnancy and Postpartum Support (Prevention of Forced Infant Separation Act)

Position: SUPPORT

Reproductive Justice Inside (RJI) and our coalition members and partners stand in support of SB776. RJI is Maryland's only statewide coalition working to address the needs of systems-involved individuals and their access to quality and timely sexual and reproductive healthcare and the right to parent with dignity.

COVID was a mixed bag – in some ways it was good and in some not so much. But it also presented the opportunity to do things differently. It gave us the space to look critically at issues and situation through a new lens. As the pandemic ravaged our world, our incarcerated population and staff were not spared. States mandated releases in order to hopefully mitigate COVID's impact behind the walls. What we did not know at the time was the impact of COVID on a pregnant individual and their unborn child.

Our state began to release these individuals – to use citations where appropriate – we did things differently. We know the critical importance of maternal bonding – we know the serious health consequences to the infant when this bond is severed. We know too the importance and health benefits of breast feeding – a right that prisons violate every day.

We know too the harm and trauma that is inflicted and compounded when this bond is severed – it creates trauma that plays out for years and generations.

SB 776 is our state's opportunity to keep the maternal bond intact – to believe in family – to believe in doing things differently and to doing all we can to ensure good family outcomes.

Keeping mother and child together as long as possible sets both on a healthy course.

We urge a favorable report on SB 776.

Respectfully,
Kimberly Haven
Executive Director

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