

Massachusetts Anti-Shackling Coalition

On the first anniversary of the state's historic law to guarantee minimum standards for pregnant women in prison and jail, we reaffirm our belief that all women deserve a safe, healthy pregnancy, birth experience and postpartum recovery, including prenatal care, adequate nutrition, and support during labor and birth.

We were pleased to see this law passed unanimously and signed into law in May 2014, reflecting the wide support in our Commonwealth for the principle that all women deserve care when they are pregnant. We are pleased to see that progress has been made and policies at some prisons and jails now comply or nearly comply with the law's limits on the use of restraints on women who are pregnant, in labor and giving birth, and in postpartum recovery.

However, we are disappointed that at some prisons and jails practices that violate the law continue to be enshrined in policy. Worse yet, we are deeply concerned to learn that women are still being shackled in violation of the law and even in violation of policies that—on paper—uphold the law.

We know that even after the passage of the law, women have been shackled to the hospital bed after giving birth, restrained on the way back to prison or jail after having their baby, and even shackled with waist chains and leg irons *inside* of prison. In many cases, women are still being driven to court or doctor's appointments in vans without seatbelts, compromising their safety—or missing important court dates because those in charge do not have appropriate vehicles ready. It is unacceptable for prisons and jails to be violating the law and jeopardizing the health of women and their pregnancies.

We are especially concerned that the Department of Correction (DOC) and sheriffs are not implementing all of the statute's requirements intended to ensure the health of pregnant women. It appears that by this one-year mark, the DOC has failed even to begin the process, mandated by the law, of developing uniform, statewide health standards for pregnant women incarcerated in Massachusetts. We call upon the DOC to actively engage in this process with the Department of Public Health and create minimum standards that mirror care in the community and institute widely accepted models of care that protect the health of pregnant and postpartum women.

Despite the law's requirement that prisons and jails provide appropriate clothing and undergarments, women are routinely forced into standard-issue clothes that are much too large or much too small. We are especially concerned that pregnant women are not receiving enough food or a healthy diet. Women report being hungry throughout pregnancy and being given food that is simply empty calories. We call for prisons and jails to act in good faith with the law's requirements and provide appropriately sized maternity clothing as women progress through their pregnancies. Additionally, we call for the statewide health standards to specifically address the dietary requirements for pregnant women, providing for fresh fruits and vegetables and sufficient fiber and nutrition to support a healthy pregnancy, beyond a set caloric requirement.

The Commonwealth has made a commitment to health care for all, which promotes the well-being of pregnant women and gives every baby a healthy start in life. We call on the Secretary of

Public Safety to ensure that the state Department of Correction and all county Sheriffs fully comply with the law and take seriously the health and treatment of pregnant women who are incarcerated.

Prisoners' Legal Services

Prison Birth Project

NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts

National Lawyers Guild - Massachusetts Chapter

Prison Policy Initiative

Real Cost of Prisons Project

Families for Justice as Healing

Massachusetts Chapter of the National Organization for Women

Black and Pink - Boston

Out Now

Unitarian Universalist Urban Ministry

National Association of Social Workers Massachusetts Chapter

Jane Doe, Inc., the Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence

Coalition for Effective Public Safety

Criminal Justice Policy Coalition

American Friends Service Committee, New England Regional Office, Healing Justice Program

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