



RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT

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Testimony Re: Senate Bill 2268 Regarding the Healthy Pregnancies for Incarcerated Women Act
Senate Judiciary Committee
February 13, 2018
Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director

Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its support for Senate Bill 2268. This bill would prohibit the use of restraints on pregnant female prisoners in their third trimester during transport by sheriffs to or from court proceedings and would require the Department of Corrections to report to the General Assembly in January of each year the number of pregnant women incarcerated at the adult correctional institutions during the previous year, including the number of women who gave birth, or who had a stillbirth or termination of pregnancy, and the number who were subject to the use of restraints as specified in § 42-56.3- 4 3(e).

In 2011, Rhode Island passed legislation supported by the ACLU, RI NOW, and the RI State Nurses Association, and other groups to prohibit the use of shackles or handcuffs on pregnant incarcerated women and only allow the use of restraints during the second or third trimester when deemed medically necessary.

Nationally, the the American Medical Association, the American Public Health Association, and others have raised health concerns due to the use of shackles on pregnant women, specifically increased risks to the mother and her child. Women experience changes in their center of gravity while pregnant which can increase the risk of losing balance or falling. Pregnant incarcerated women who are shackled or handcuffed are at an increased risk of falling. Restraints compromise their ability to protect their body or break their fall.

We believe this common sense measure, which builds on current statute prohibiting the use of shackles during the second and third trimester, will ensure the health and safety of pregnant incarcerated women and their babies.

Thank you for the leadership that the General Assembly has shown on this issue.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

