

FREE: Helps unveil Dignity for Incarcerated Women & Girls legislation

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FREE, the state's first non-profit organization for and by Justice System Impacted Women, is seeking passage of a Dignity for Incarcerated Women & Girls Bill. This bill is being sponsored by State Senator Lena Taylor and Representative Jodi Emerson. FREE, as part of the WI Dignity Coalition, will join Senator Taylor and Representative Emerson for a press conference to unveil both FREE and the first draft of the Dignity for Incarcerated Women and Girls Act.

"Humanity doesn't start or stop with incarceration. The shackling of incarcerated pregnant women has long been a problem, in a penal system that was most often designed for men," states Senator Lena Taylor, the legislation's author, "Chains wrapped around a pregnant woman's waist and ankles endangers both the mother and the pregnancy. At least, 37 other states have figured that out already and limit the shackling of incarcerated pregnant women. When you know better, you do better. It's time we do better in Wisconsin." The Dignity for Incarcerated Women and Girls Act seeks to outlaw the practice of shackling pregnant women at 6 months gestation until 6 weeks postpartum.

The legislation further seeks to create a WI Doula Prison Project allowing pregnant women the opportunity to have trained doula services before, during and after their delivery. "As a state we have failed to acknowledge the trauma prison causes to children, some even before birth," says Peggy West-Schroder, FREE, Executive Director, "WI Prison Doula's would assist mothers during the initial separation from their infants in the hospital and then assist in the important work of keeping Mom &

baby connected.”

The last piece of this proposed legislation provides several measures to be taken by the WI Department of Corrections to assure dignity for women and girls in their care. “Six and a half years ago when FREE was created people were not talking about the issues involved in with the incarceration of Women and Girls. It’s important that we acknowledge the issues women deal with in and outside of facilities. Prisons were built for men, we just throw women and girls in them”, emphasizes Catoya Roberts, FREE, Co-Founder and Board President.

WHEN AND WHERE:

Wednesday, March 8, 2023

WI State Capitol, 2 E Main Street, Senate Parlor, Madison, WI 53703

12 noon - 12:30p.m.

Press Conference participants:

State Senator Lena Taylor,

State Representative Jodi Emerson,

Catoya Roberts, FREE Board President,

Peggy West-Schroder, FREE Executive Director,

Cheri Branham, Directly Impacted Advocate,

Brittany Lee, Dream.Org.