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AB 1225: Dignity for Incarcerated Women

IN BRIEF:

AB 1225 recognizes the different needs of incarcerated women. This bill would provide better trauma-informed care and health care services for women in prison, facilitate and strengthen communication with their families and children, and help them reintegrate into their communities once released. The goal of this bill is to help guarantee the safety and well-being of females in incarcerated settings.

BACKGROUND AND ISSUE:

The Dignity for Incarcerated Women Act starts to change our approach regarding women in prison by ensuring that they are treated with dignity and equipping them with the tools, resources, and services they need to successfully return to their families and communities.

AB 1225 recognizes that the very real and harmful impact of incarceration on women and families has been well documented. Preventing women who are incarcerated from meeting their most basic health needs is not only dehumanizing, humiliating, and inequitable, it's also dangerous.

Women are still the fastest growing population behind bars. The reprehensible experiences of women behind bars receive far less attention, even as the number of incarcerated women between 1980 and 2016 increased seven-fold. Women who are incarcerated often have very high rates of past traumatic experiences. 86% of women in jails and prisons reported being survivors of past sexual violence and 77% reported being survivors of domestic violence.

In 2018, Dr. Weber worked on restoring dignity for incarcerated women with AB 2550. Among other things, it prohibited male correctional officers from conducting unnecessary pat down searches of female inmates and prohibited male correctional officers from unnecessarily entering an area where female inmates may be in a state of undress, including restrooms, shower areas, or medical treatment areas.

AB 1225 is a bill to build upon what Dr. Weber started in 2018. We need to do more in reducing trauma for incarcerated women.

THE SOLUTION:

This bill will:

- Increase and improve visitation hours for women with their children
- Provide counseling/parenting & lifestyle classes
- Provide proper trauma-informed care for women.
- Set a bonding period for a newborn and an inmate
- Provide post-partum depression care/recognition
- Stipulate the mandatory distribution of basic hygiene products free of charge to all incarcerated women,
- Prevent women from being held in solitary confinement for "medical observation and terminate shackling of pregnant women"

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