

London Teeter

**Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety
Public Hearing on the
Safe and Supported Pregnancy for Incarcerated Individuals Amendment Act of 2024
B25-0914**

October 21, 2024

Councilmember Pinto and members of the D.C. Council, my name is London Teeter and I was pregnant and gave birth while being in custody of the DC Department of Corrections. When I came to the DC Jail, I was not only 24 weeks pregnant but had a high risk pregnancy along with an autoimmune disease called ulcerative colitis, meaning I have ulcers in my colon. All of this meant I needed to be monitored more frequently to make sure my baby and I were healthy.

When I came to the jail, I did not receive any correct information about my prenatal care, labor and delivery, or any postpartum care. As a first-time mom, words could never express the confusion, nervousness, or hurt I felt. I knew my glucose test was coming at 28 weeks so I put in sick call slips to get my initial appointment. I also had to put in sick call slips to receive any results. Even after learning my results, I did not receive any explanation about what the results meant. I asked questions to correctional officers, medical staff, my case manager, and my former criminal attorney about my worries and concerns regarding me giving birth while in custody. Yet, I still received incorrect answers or none at all.

During all this sadness, frustration, and confusion, I was able to find and connect with the Washington Lawyers Committee. When I first met with Chelsea from the WLC, she went above and beyond. She was able to answer my questions and helped relieve some of my anxiety. I knew someone was on my side advocating for my care. My primary concern were my prenatal care, labor and delivery, breastfeeding, and my postpartum care. With this being my first child, so many questions ran through my head, especially while being incarcerated. Was my daughter going to be born in my cell or would I be taken to the hospital? What hospital would I be taken to? Will I only have COs in the room or will Miah Robinson, my mother-in-law, be able to be in the room with me? Will male and females COs be in the hospital room with me?

Prior to my incarceration and being a first time mother, I did lots of research for my whole pregnancy journey. Being able to breastfeed was extremely important to me. I knew it was the healthiest way for my daughter to receive her food and nutrition, along with the bonding and connection. When I asked about breastfeeding at the jail I was told I was allowed to and would receive a breastpump and fridge. Yet, again

I was told the wrong information and never told how and when my milk would be transferred to my daughter, the supplies I would receive and how I would clean my bottles and pumping supplies.

With all this being said and still understanding I am incarcerated, I would never want anyone to ever experience the confusion and hurt I went through. Not only us mothers but our babies deserve the correct adequate medical treatment and care. Women incarcerated while being pregnant deserve the right treatment, care, privacy, safety, and support. Although I would never go through this experience again, I am glad I am make a change for anyone who comes after me!