

**Thaniyyah Veney**  
**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 DC Council. My name is Thaniyyah Veney and I am the mother of two daughters. This summer, I was pregnant and gave birth while in DOC custody.

When I came to the DC Jail, I was 13 weeks pregnant. I did not receive pregnancy food trays with extra portions and a snack until I was 35 weeks. I was also concerned about how I would go into labor and give birth while incarcerated. The correctional officers and my case manager never gave me any answers. I was only told that I was not able to have a support person with me when I delivered. I was very confused and frustrated. I did not want to go through labor alone because having a child is a very important and special moment.

Through London Teeter, I met with Chelsea Sullivan from the Washington Lawyers' Committee. I worked closely with Chelsea to make sure that my sister could be in the room with me when I had to give birth.

On June 23, 2024, my water broke while I was in my cell. It took the nurses 30 to 45 minutes to help get me dressed and ready for the ambulance to pick me up. I thought I was going to have to have my baby at the Jail.

Once in the ambulance, we drove into the intersection where I had to be transported into a different ambulance. I was confused because I didn't know what was going on while I was actively going into labor.

When I arrived at Howard University Hospital, I was placed in the labor and delivery room. Within hours, I had an emergency c-section. I gave birth to my daughter on June 23 at 4:59 PM. Fortunately, my sister was able to be with me when I delivered but getting her in the room was delayed because of confusion between DOC and hospital staff.

During my surgery, there was a guard standing in the room. Even after giving birth, there were two guards in the room with me. One was male. I did not have any privacy with my baby and I did not feel comfortable breastfeeding with him there.

Once it was time to be discharged and go back to the DOC, it was the hardest thing saying goodbye to my daughter. The memories of having to leave her will always be stuck in my head.

As I left the hospital, the COs tried to handcuff me, but I told them that it was against the policy and against the law. The CO did not believe me and I told them to call then- Deputy Warden Vick who confirmed I was correct.

When I was back at DOC, I was taken to the medical unit where I shared a cell with London. Together, we breastfed in 30-minute increments and took turns using our pumps because we only had one socket to share, while the other socket was used for the freezer. During visitation, I transported my breastmilk in trash bags, and it would thaw by the time visitation was over. After two and half months, I chose to stop breastfeeding because of the limited rec time while on the medical unit, and I felt like I was falling into a deep depression.

I want this bill to pass because I do not think a mother or child should have to endure so much pain, and being incarcerated should not limit having a support person. Should no mom have to go through being alone while giving birth. That is more trauma added to not only me, but my daughter too.