

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, and other members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am writing in support of House Bill 5288 as a woman and concerned citizen.

The number of women in prison has been increasing at an alarming rate since 1977. In 2004, four percent of women in state prisons and three percent of women in federal prisons were pregnant at the time of admittance. (Mothers, Infants and Imprisonment: A National Look at Prison Nurseries and Community-Based Alternatives, Institute on Women and Criminal Justice, 2009, page 4, available at <http://wpaonline.org/pdf/Mothers%20Infants%20and%20Imprisonment%202009.pdf>.)

Research has shown that when adequate resources are available for prison nursery programs, women who participate show lower rates of recidivism, and their children show no adverse affects as a result of their participation. By keeping mothers and infants together, these programs prevent foster care placement and allow for the formation of maternal/child bonds during a critical period of infant development.

This study would certainly prove fruitful, and is a natural extension for some of the already existing programs in Connecticut. For example, in Connecticut, four residential treatment programs provide gender specific services and counseling to pregnant women and women with children involved in the criminal justice system. (Report to the Governor and Legislature, The Prison and Jail Overcrowding Commission, page 17, 2003, available at <http://www.ct.gov/doc/lib/doc/PDF/PDFReport/PJOC.pdf>.) There is also the Norwalk Economic Opportunity Now (NEON) Women and Children Halfway House for sentenced women in Niantic prison which provides temporary housing for those women and their children. (Mothers, Infants and Imprisonment: A National Look at Prison Nurseries and Community-Based Alternatives, Institute on Women and Criminal Justice, 2009, page 31, available at <http://wpaonline.org/pdf/Mothers%20Infants%20and%20Imprisonment%202009.pdf>.)

Thank you for raising HB 5288 and I urge a committee's joint favorable report.

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