

MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

ENSURE ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE SERVICES FOR INCARCERATED WOMEN

A.211 Rosenthal L./S.401 Biaggi

The New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NYSCADV) urges the New York State Legislature to pass this legislation, which will create a women's health education program in state and local correctional facilities. This critical bill is needed to improve the health of incarcerated women and improve the knowledge and skills of facility medical staff in providing health services to such women.

Incarcerated women should not be deprived of compassionate and comprehensive healthcare services. Yet, in New York State's correctional facilities, comprehensive healthcare services are not available. This means incarcerated women do not have access to gynecological care, are not allowed to have a support person present during labor and delivery, and are not consistently provided prenatal care, among other services. Moreover, prison medical staff are not trained in domestic and sexual violence.

NYSCADV supports the passage of this bill, which would rectify the aforementioned gaps in healthcare provisions to incarcerated women by amending the Corrections and Public Health Law to:

- Establish a women's health education program in state and local correctional facilities to educate facility medical staff on the special medical needs of women, including training on providing professional, respectful and informed care of women who are victims of domestic or sexual violence;
- Direct correctional facilities to provide gynecological care;
- Permit a pregnant inmate to have a support person of her choosing accompany her during labor and delivery of a child;
- Inform pregnant inmates of available pregnancy counseling services, the right to access abortion services, and in state facilities, the ability to apply to nursery programs;
- Provide pregnant inmates with prenatal care, including regular check-ups and access to prenatal vitamins and specialized diet; and,
- Direct the NYS Department of Health to conduct a study of women's health in prisons and provide a report to the Governor and Legislature.

Every person deserves access to comprehensive healthcare services tailored to their unique needs. **NYSCADV urges the NYS Legislature to pass this legislation which would help ensure incarcerated women have access to the healthcare services they require.**

ABOUT NYSCADV:

Established in 1978, NYSCADV is designated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as the information clearinghouse, primary point of contact, and resource center on domestic violence for the State of New York. NYSCADV is responsible for supporting the development of policies, protocol, and procedures to enhance domestic violence intervention and prevention and also provides education and technical assistance to the network of primary-purpose domestic violence service providers statewide.

For more information, contact: Joan Gerhardt, Director of Public Policy and Advocacy, 518.482.5465