

Chair Aisha Wahab
Senate Committee on Public Safety

June 22, 2024

RE: Support AB 2740

Chair Wahab and committee members,

CleanEarth4Kids supports [AB 2740](#) to require pregnant women in state prisons to be referred to a social worker for parenting and other classes on caring for newborns and options for placement and visiting the baby.¹

AB 2740 would require prisons to assign a social worker to incarcerated pregnant women within 7 days of arriving at the prison. This would allow pregnant women to discuss caring for the newborn, placement options, and visitation. It would also mandate additional meals and beverages as part of the prenatal care plan for incarcerated pregnant women and also require that the incarcerated mother and newborn child stay at a medical facility for at least 3 days for recovery and bonding.

Incarcerated mothers would also be allowed to breastfeed their child and pump additional breast milk for when the child is removed from the facility. AB 2740 requires prisons to speed up the visitation application process to avoid visitation delays once the baby is born. Additionally, prisons would be forbidden from limiting visitation with the newborn unless the mother was convicted of a sex offense against a minor.

AB 2740 ensures equity amongst pregnant women to receive the proper medical, nutritional, and social support. Providing equal access to these necessities amongst incarcerated women will further prevent health issues, allow the opportunity for a bright future for both mom and baby, and secure healthy infant development.

Providing Additional Meals & Beverages

Ensuring sufficient nutritional intake for pregnant women is crucial due to the [lack of nutritional density](#), rigid meal size, and schedule associated with incarcerated meals.² Prenatal development relies heavily on the nutritional supply of the mother; not meeting the proper nourishment needs can lead to impairments within the newborn and the mother-to-be. Lack of consistent nutritional access is associated with [chronic illness and mental illness](#).³ In order to facilitate equal opportunity and a healthy future for the newborn, we must close this gap in dietary needs.

¹ https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240AB2740

² <https://scholarworks.wm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1106&context=asbookchapters>

³ https://dspace.wlu.edu/bitstream/handle/11021/34353/RG38_Peabody_Poverty_2019.pdf

Pre & Postpartum Medical care

[Health care](#) should be the same for pregnant incarcerated women as non-incarcerated women, especially with the higher risk of medical conditions, diseases, and infections for these individuals.⁴

Women's health care has been at a disadvantage within an incarcerated setting as it is a male-focused institutionalization. Providing the proper care will work towards lowering the rates of illness and mental deficits that plague the incarcerated populations.

Bonding Time

Allowing bonding time between incarcerated women and their children not only supports the well-being of both parties during the period of incarceration but also lays the groundwork for successful reintegration into society upon release. Bonding time is necessary for [healthy attachments](#),⁵ [developmental cues for infant growth](#),⁶ [supports](#) mental health, and encourages positive parenting.⁷

Visiting times will reinforce bonding and allow for breastfeeding. Breastfeeding has been shown to absolutely provide [health benefits for both mother and baby](#).⁸

Separation can be traumatic for both parties and is linked to high levels of [mental and psychiatric illness](#).⁹ Additionally, bonding can be motivating for the mother to make more positive choices and is linked to [lower reincarceration rates](#).¹⁰

Placement Options for Newborn

Granting the option for placement plans within newborns of an incarcerated mother ensures the well-being of the child by solidifying a consistent and safe environment. There are many options that can be personalized to the family's specific situation in order to alleviate the negative effects of separation and instability. Despite varying circumstances, data shows that [keeping mother and baby together in incarceration decreases offenses](#) and influences a positive relationship between the two with increased infant wellbeing.¹¹

Parenting Classes

Promoting [positive parenting skills](#) is important in supporting healthy child development, reducing the risk of intergenerational incarceration, improving coping

⁴ <https://www.acog.org/clinical/health-care-incarcerated-pregnant-postpartum-and-nonpregnant-individuals>

⁵ <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/bonding.html>

⁶ <https://health.ucdavis.edu/health-wellness/bonding-is-essential-for-normal-infant-development/2010/01>

⁷ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5330336/>

⁸ <https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/about-breastfeeding/why-it-matters.html>

⁹ https://www.americanbar.org/litigation_committees/childrights/parent-child-separation-trauma-memo.pdf

¹⁰ <https://www.urban.org/parent-child-visiting-practices-in-prisons-and-jails.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.prisonlegalnews.org/news/2016/jun/3/benefits-allowing-prisoners-raise-babies-born-prison/>

skills, and preparing for reintegration.¹²

Infant Health in the United States

While neonatal mortality rates in the US have been steadily falling ([5.42 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 2020](#)), it is [much higher](#) than in other developed countries like Japan, Sweden, Australia, France, Germany, or the UK.^{13,14}

The leading causes of neonatal mortality in the US are [birth defects, preterm birth, and low birth weight](#).¹⁵ Preterm birth and low birth weight are often caused by [inadequate nutrition, insufficient prenatal care](#), and even [physical violence](#) during pregnancy.^{16,17}

The rate of [preterm birth among Black women was 50% higher](#) than among White or Hispanic women.¹⁸

Black Disparities in Maternal Health in the United States.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), maternal mortality in the US has been [increasing](#) since 2020, with 84% of pregnancy-related deaths considered to be preventable.¹⁹ Maternal mortality is commonly caused by [infections and high blood pressure](#) during pregnancy, childbirth, or the postpartum period.²⁰ [Inequalities in health care](#) are a major cause of maternal deaths.²¹

[Black women have a significantly higher risk of maternal mortality](#), 2.5 times the ratio for white women and 3 times the ratio for Hispanic women.²²

The rate of [preterm birth among Black women was 50% higher](#) than among White or Hispanic women.²³

Black mothers are [twice](#) as likely as White mothers to receive late or no prenatal care.²⁴ Care is often delayed during the beginning stages of prenatal care, [which can lead to a higher risk for maternal mortality](#).²⁵ Health concerns, specifically prenatal and postnatal care, are [often ignored by both government and medical professionals](#), which causes trust issues between the Black community and healthcare

¹² <https://www.parentinginsideout.org>

¹³ <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternalinfanthealth/infantmortality.htm>

¹⁴ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/field/infant-mortality-rate/country-comparison/>

¹⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternalinfanthealth/infantmortality.htm>

¹⁶ <https://www.whattoexpect.com/first-year/health/low-birth-weight-baby>

¹⁷ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4361157/>

¹⁸ <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternalinfanthealth/pretermbirth.htm>

¹⁹ <https://www.yalemedicine.org/news/maternal-mortality-on-the-rise>

²⁰ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/>

²¹ <https://www.yalemedicine.org/news/>

²² <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-brief-report/2020/dec/>

²³ <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternalinfanthealth/pretermbirth.htm>

²⁴ <https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/>

²⁵ <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2605660030>

professionals.²⁶ This [medical mistrust often causes Black mothers to not seek or delay healthcare](#).²⁷ Another issue is providing affordable access to [prenatal and postnatal care to Black mothers](#) who often can not afford the care or have adequate transportation.²⁸ Timely access to prenatal and postnatal care will decrease maternal and infant mortality for Black mothers and infants.

Postpartum Depression

Postpartum depression is a [strong feeling of sorrow, anxiety, emptiness, and fatigue](#) that persists for an extended period of time after childbirth.²⁹ These emotions typically can begin [1 to 3 weeks after giving birth](#), making it difficult for the mother to care for herself and her child.³⁰

[1 in 8 American women](#) reported symptoms consistent with postpartum depression, with almost [half of Hispanic mothers and 45% of Black mothers](#) reporting early postpartum depressive symptoms.^{31,32}

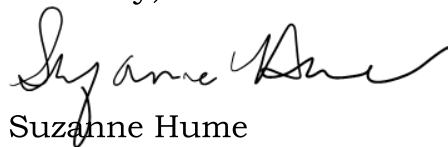
The [lack of emotional support for Black pregnant women](#) has been linked to an increase in psychological distress, depression, and anxiety, which can lead to negative birth outcomes and postpartum care.³³

Support AB 2740

Chair Wahab and committee members, CleanEarth4Kids.org asks you to support AB 2740 to give incarcerated women and their newborns a chance for a healthy, happy life.

The decisions we make today affect our children's health and future.

Sincerely,



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²⁶ <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajog.2021.01.004>

²⁷ <https://journals.lww.com/jpnnjournal/>

²⁸ <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/eliminating-racial-disparities-maternal-infant-mortality/>

²⁹ <https://www.womenshealth.gov/mental-health/mental-health-conditions/postpartum-depression>

³⁰ <https://www.marchofdimes.org/find-support/topics/postpartum/postpartum-depression>

³¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/depression/index.htm>

³² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4302723/>

³³ <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2022/10/better-care-black-mothers>