

The Connecticut General Assembly



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PORTER LEADS THE CHARGE ON PASSAGE OF BILL THAT ENSURES INCARCERATED WOMEN ARE TREATED WITH RESPECT AND DIGNITY

S.B. 13 would prevent state from shackling imprisoned women during pregnancy or labor

State Rep. Robyn Porter, D-New Haven, applauded the legislature's passage of a bill Thursday that would help restore dignity and respect for incarcerated women's health and human rights.

Senate Bill 13, "An Act Concerning Fair Treatment of Incarcerated Women," passed the state House of Representatives unanimously. The legislation, which now heads to the governor's desk to be signed into law, passed the state Senate May 1 unanimously as well.

"While Connecticut has been at the forefront of efforts to reform the criminal justice system, we have failed to address the challenges our women face while imprisoned. Instead of being treated with the dignity and respect they deserve, our imprisoned women have found themselves locked up in a system that is designed specifically for men. As the primary caregivers for their families, it is crucial that we give these women a platform for successful rehabilitation and reentry. This starts with restoring the very important element of humanity back into the way incarcerated women are treated," **Porter** said.

The legislature's passage of the bill comes on the heels of York Correctional Facility coming under fire after a pregnant woman was forced to give birth in her prison cell.

S.B. 13 would prevent the state from shackling incarcerated women during pregnancy or labor; require the state to provide incarcerated women with sufficient menstrual supplies; create family-centric visitation policies; ensure imprisoned women are able to shower and perform other bodily functions without non-medical staff of the opposite sex viewing their bodies; and establish prenatal and postpartum support, including lactation policies, for pregnant and postpartum incarcerated women.

Currently, state laws do not prevent the Connecticut Department of Correction from shackling incarcerated women during pregnancy or labor, and state restrictions on the number and type of menstrual products freely available to incarcerated women force many to either buy supplies themselves or do without.

"As lawmakers and advocates, it is not only our job to lend authenticity to the voices of incarcerated women but also to be a vehicle for change. It is our responsibility to find a solution that treats everyone with respect, dignity and compassion, especially during pregnancy and childbirth," **Porter** said.