

Primary Caretakers Legislation

Keeping Families Together



Maryland
Justice
Project

Parental Incarceration in Maryland

- On any given day, 90,000 children in Maryland have a parent under some form of correctional supervision
- In 2016, 58% of women and 47% of men incarcerated in state prisons nationwide reported having at least one minor child

The Impact of Parental Incarceration

- Higher rates of incarceration on the state level is associated with higher overall infant mortality, child mortality, and preterm births
- Children with incarcerated mothers have higher rates of incarceration themselves
- Parental incarceration is associated with more antisocial behaviors, mental health issues, drug use, school suspension and expulsion, and economic challenges
- Parental incarceration is associated with family instability, higher rates of child welfare involvement, PTSD, and poor academic outcomes
- 65% of families with a member in prison or jail were unable to meet their basic needs, and one third were in debt from court-related fines and fees

Primary Caretaker Legislation

- This legislation would allow more primary caregivers to participate in community based sentencing alternatives instead of incarceration
- This would help more parents and caregivers stay connected with their children and lead to better outcomes for children
- This would also lead to better outcomes for justice involved caregivers. Studies show that women who have their children with them while completing residential drug treatment programs are far more likely to complete the program
- In Washington, women who participated in the Parent Sentencing Alternative had a recidivism of 8%, whereas women who were incarcerated and separated from their children had a recidivism rate of 29%

Expanding the Use of Community Alternatives Is More Cost Efficient

- It costs roughly \$44,000 to incarcerate one person for a year in Maryland, \$120 per day
- In Oklahoma, a program for women that included housing assistance, drug treatment, mental health services, education, employment assistance, and parenting classes cost \$17,000 for an 18-24 month stay.
- Community alternatives would also reduce state spending on foster care for children of incarcerated parents

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