

Good afternoon, Ms. Chair, members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity. My name is Gregory Verzosa and I'm representing myself. I'm currently pursuing a nursing degree and I support this bill.

The time from the start of a pregnancy through the first year postpartum is an incredibly vulnerable time for a patient and an immensely influential period for determining the health of their baby. I just finished my OB rotation in labor and delivery and the neonatal ICU where I learned just how much is needed to respond to and prevent the worst complications of pregnancy. To say that we can consistently provide this to incarcerated pregnant people is disconnected from the reality of the conditions and the capacity within our prisons and jails.

We should see our patients around 10 times during their pregnancy for prenatal care, but we may need to see them more often if there are complications. Preeclampsia is a common complication of pregnancy that if left untreated can result in the loss of the pregnancy, pre-term birth, or loss of the patient. It occurs in 1 out of 25 patients and can require specially trained staff providing constant monitoring and care, but we can prevent it from becoming an emergency if we intervene in a timely manner. It is important that ALL pregnant patients maintain a healthy diet, get plenty of rest, and reduce their stress.

This is harder while incarcerated where they are at higher risk for neglect, mistreatment, malnutrition, and violence. COVID infection during pregnancy is also linked to a higher risk for preeclampsia and we consistently see higher rates of transmission in our prisons and jails. The first year postpartum is equally important in determining an infant's healthy development and attachment and continues to be a crucial time for the parent's health, especially their mental health. Around 80% of maternal mortality occurs during this period.

Everyone deserves this time to bond with their child and recover. By allowing them this opportunity we are disrupting cycles of harm and trauma. We are correcting an injustice we have been negligent in addressing by collectively acknowledging that the conditions that pregnant people experience while incarcerated are in direct opposition to maintaining a healthy pregnancy. We've already heard multiple accounts of the lack of compassion these patients experience while incarcerated. Please take a moment to think of your loved ones who have had difficult pregnancies and whether you'd want them to go through that while incarcerated. Please support this bill and together we can give these patients an opportunity to thrive. Thank you for your time.