

LA Senate Bill 558

"Dignity for Incarcerated Women Act"

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This bill provides for increased access to healthcare products for incarcerated women including sanitary pads, tampons, toilet paper, and hygiene products and restricts male staff from conducting pat down searches and entering areas where incarcerated women may be undressed to preserve the dignity of women in prison.

PART 1: Healthcare Products

Women do not have choice or control over menstrual cycles and requirements and therefore should not be required to pay for menstrual products to insure their health and dignity.

There are 2,067 women incarcerated in state and local facilities in Louisiana - 1,858 are of reproductive age and in need of these products.

Feminine Hygiene

Incarcerated women in Louisiana report receiving as few as 10 pads per month and 1 roll of toilet paper per week.

Additional sanitary products must be purchased for a price above market value which places an undue burden on indigent women and women without family financial support.

Federal and State Policy

The Federal Bureau of Prisons recently announced that women in federal prisons would receive menstrual products free of charge. However, fewer than 10 percent of incarcerated females are housed in federal facilities nationwide.

In June 2016 New York City unanimously passed a law mandating free tampons and pads for schools, homeless shelters, and prisons.

Kentucky unanimously passed similar legislation last week. Virginia passed legislation last month. Alabama, Kentucky, Maryland, Georgia, Connecticut, and California are all considering similar legislation.

The Public Supports This Policy

Polling research out by the Justice Action Network, shows that 90 percent of voters agree that providing menstrual products in prisons is a necessary reform, crossing partisan lines (85 percent of Republicans, 91 percent of independents, and 94 percent of Democrats).

Part 2: Correctional Officers

Allowing male officers to conduct pat down searches and enter restrooms or showers increases the possibility of sexual assault and likelihood of re-traumatization for incarcerated women.

Trauma

86% of women in prison are sexual-abuse survivors.

Sexual Victimization and Misconduct in Correctional Facilities

Between 2009 and 2011, females represented approximately 13 percent of people held in local jails, but 67 percent of victims of staff perpetrated sexual victimization.

38.9% of females in jails and 32.1% in prison reported at least 1 incident of staff sexual misconduct and 5.8% in jail and 13.9% in prison reported 11 or more incidents. These were merely reported incidents.

Contributing Organizations



WOMEN
WITH A
VISION



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