

Realities of Anti-Shackling Bill Evoke Emotion

Written by Wisconsin Senate Democrats

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State Senator says, in Milwaukee County Jail alone, at least 40 women were shackled while giving birth since 2011.

MADISON – Senator Lena Taylor (D-Milwaukee) testified before Wisconsin’s Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety Wednesday in support of SB 316, commonly known as the Anti-Shackling Bill. Originally introduced in 2017, the bill failed to gain needed support to become law. Taylor hopes this time will be different.

In addition to Sen. Taylor, doctors and supporters of those affected by shackling, provided moving testimony at today’s public hearing. Shackling is the practice of using chains to restrain pregnant women, during labor and after delivery. Following the public hearing, the Senator issued the following statement:



“As the result of a recent lawsuit, we know that in the Milwaukee County Jail alone, at least 40 women were shackled while giving birth since 2011. In one case, a woman was shackled during 21 hours of labor. In another, correctional officers overruled the request of medical staff to remove a chain covering a patient’s belly, limiting their ability to provide treatment. This is unacceptable, inhumane, and unnecessary.

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Wisconsin's lack of statutory guidance on this issue is out of step with correctional policies nationwide. The U.S. Marshal Service, Federal bureau of Prisons, ICE, and 22 states already prohibit or restrict the shackling of pregnant women.

Taylor further noted that "it was difficult to listen to some of the testimony and quite frankly, it left many in attendance shocked to learn how pregnant women in the state's care have been treated. We need to correct this and I am hopeful that we will this session."