

February 19, 2024

Monica Pyles

Citizen

Proponent Written-Only Testimony on SB 489
Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare

Chair Gossage and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the Nursery Program for Incarcerated Moms (SB 489).

My name is Monica Pyles, and I would like to share my personal story of Trauma, Incarceration and Redemption. I grew up in and out of the foster care system due to extreme sexual and physical abuse in my home. I found a way out by getting married at the age of 16 to emancipate myself. I stayed with the man I married for 12 years, we both went to the military and had three children together. I married for all the wrong reasons and although it seemed like I had done well with the cards I was dealt, I had no self-esteem and was extremely hot tempered. I never dealt with the trauma from my past and my decision making was far-fetched from healthy. I was very co-dependent and allowed some of the same abuse to repeat itself as an adult. I divorced my husband in 2010 and entered another relationship shortly after having two more children. I was overwhelmed with responsibility, working long hours as a nurse, and keeping up with all the kids. The new relationship ended quickly. I was alone and struggling. I became ill with intestinal problems and my doctor prescribed me a controlled medication. Within two weeks I can say I was addicted. I ended up abusing those two meds for 18 months and in the 18 months I was raped and was charged for the first time with a couple misdemeanors. May 2015, I allowed my ex-boyfriend and the father of my two children to come over and that decision landed me in prison for 7.5 years. I was convicted of attempted murder during a robbery gone wrong. My ex was a drug dealer and had either purchased or stolen drugs from someone. When he came to my house that person followed him there. In my flight or fight response I intervened and shot the man. After coming to prison, I thought I was going to die of a broken heart, realizing I took myself out of all 5 of my kids' lives knowing I was their only constant support. Life for the first three years in prison was hard! I found out I was pregnant again when I got to prison. I had to give birth while incarcerated, which was yet another loss. I chose a better life for my daughter by allowing a family I knew to adopt her. I stayed in contact with all my kids through visits and through programs. My ex-husband finally stepped up to be the man I wish he could have been long ago. He took care of his children and assisted with my other two. About the third year I was incarcerated I began to reach out to God. His work in me was slow at first but looking back it was and is amazing. I then reached out more for programming, and I spent hours helping the other women around me. I was finally offered to be one of the first 13 to work at the new Polo Plant at TCF where I thrived being promoted to team captain then to release and be offered a position at corporate. I was determined not to leave prison without a job! I also was determined not to leave God at the prison where I found Him!! When I was released, it was very hard to re-enculture back into society after being gone for so long. I had a committed heart and a made-up mind that I not only was going to succeed but that I didn't have to go back to who I once was. I

now own my very first home which I was able to purchase only one year post release. I work part time for Brothers in Blue Reentry a faith-based program for male and female incarcerated individuals. I participate in speaking engagements to bring awareness to the needs of programming and resources for the women at TCF. Most importantly I keep God first in everything I do. He has restored my life to a level far better than I could have imagined. All the broken relationships that came from my past decision are mended. I have all my children actively in my life. This is my story, and I am very pleased to hear that there may be another resource for the women at TCF. The impact you can have when you invest in people is priceless.

I urge this committee to support the Nursery Program for Incarcerated Moms (SB 489).

Thank you for the opportunity to share this testimony with you today. Feel free to contact me with any questions at monicapyles22@gmail.com .

Sincerely,

Monica Pyles

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