

Honorable Members of the Public Health Welfare Committee,

I am writing to express my concern regarding [SB 489: Nursery Program for Incarcerated Moms](#). While I acknowledge the intent behind such initiatives to support incarcerated individuals who are parents, it has become evident that the program in its current form is fundamentally inequitable and fails to address the core issues it aims to resolve.

First and foremost, the program's inequity lies in its selective application. It appears to disproportionately benefit certain demographics, leaving behind a significant portion of the incarcerated population who are also parents but are denied access to such support. This selective approach perpetuates systemic inequalities within the correctional system, further marginalizing already vulnerable individuals and communities.

Moreover, the resources allocated to the nursery program are donations and not guaranteed. Additional funds are needed to address the underlying issues contributing to incarceration rates, such as lack of access to education, employment opportunities, mental health services, and substance abuse treatment. By focusing solely on providing nursery facilities within correctional institutions, we are merely addressing the symptoms of a much deeper problem without tackling its root causes.

Furthermore, there is a concerning lack of transparency and accountability regarding the criteria used for eligibility and the decision-making process behind the allocation of resources for the nursery program. Without clear guidelines and oversight mechanisms in place, there is a risk of favoritism, discrimination, and misuse of public funds.

As advocates for justice and equity, it is imperative that we prioritize comprehensive and inclusive approaches to addressing those impacted by the criminal justice system. This includes investing in programs that facilitate family reunification, provide parenting education and support, offer alternatives to incarceration for nonviolent offenses, resentencing, implementing a drug court, and promote rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

In conclusion, I urge this esteemed Committee on Public Health Welfare to critically evaluate the correctional facility nursery program and take immediate steps to rectify its inequities and implement and allocate funding to address the underlying causes of incarceration such as affordable housing, access to education, access to mental health services, and childcare. It is our moral and ethical responsibility to ensure that all individuals, regardless of their background or circumstances, have equal access to the support and resources needed to rebuild their lives and strengthen their families.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,  
*Sharla Smith*  
Sharla Smith

Founder and Director, Kansas Birth Equity Network

[Smithsa98@gmail.com](mailto:Smithsa98@gmail.com)