

**Testimony as Submitted in support of HB23-1187 “Alternatives in Criminal Justice System and Pregnant Persons” by Hunter Nelson, Policy Analyst at the Colorado Children’s Campaign**

**Senate Judiciary Committee**

**Mar. 15, 2023, Upon Adjournment**

**Old Supreme Court**

Dear Madame Chair and members of the committee,

My name is Hunter Nelson, and I am a policy analyst at the Colorado Children’s Campaign. Together with our partner organizations and communities across the state, we advocate for the development and implementation of data-driven public policy that improves child and family well-being. We fight for a world in which, without exception, public policies and investments remove barriers for most impacted children and families and improve well-being for every child and family. The Children’s Campaign is in strong support of HB23-1187 “Alternatives in Criminal Justice System and Pregnant Persons.”

The pregnancy and postpartum periods are extremely important times in a birthing person and their baby’s lives. Research has demonstrated the correlation between maternal health and infant health, as babies born to healthy moms also tend to be healthier themselves. Proper postpartum care is also critically important – according to the World Health Organization, the risk of death is highest for newborn babies, with 75% of neonatal deaths occurring within the first week after birth. Also, when physically possible for the postpartum person, exclusively breastfeeding or chestfeeding for the first six months postpartum has proven positive health effects on both them and their baby, including reducing the risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes, and of certain forms of cancer.

Carceral settings, even those with programs that have the best intentions, often do not adequately meet the needs of the pregnant or postpartum person and their child. HB23-1187 aims to promote the health and well-being of pregnant and postpartum people and their infants by offering them alternative forms of sentencing, including diversion, deferred sentencing and unaccompanied furlough. Healthy children grow into healthy adults, and research has shown that the first years of a child’s life are the most critical for growth and development. By explicitly allowing the court to offer alternative sentencing options to pregnant and postpartum defendants, positive, healthy attachment can be formed between birthing and lactating people and their babies, leading to better health and social outcomes.

All women and people, regardless of their carceral status, deserve the opportunities and resources to bond with and provide for their babies following their birth. **Therefore, the Children’s Campaign asks that you vote yes on HB23-1187.**

Thank you,

*Hunter Nelson*

Hunter Nelson

Policy Analyst

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