



February 23, 2018

Support Senate Bill 133 in Kentucky to Focus Corrections Resource on True Public Safety Threats

On behalf of FreedomWorks' activist community in Kentucky, I urge you contact your senator and urge him or her to support Senate Bill 133 to protect incarcerated women in Kentucky and refocus corrections resources on true public safety threats. This bill concentrates on the drivers of female incarceration in Kentucky, currently home to the second highest rate of female incarceration nationally, more than twice the national average, while also providing greater protections to those incarcerated in jails and prisons across Kentucky, particularly for pregnant women in custody.

Right now, many jails and prisons are ill equipped or struggle to handle pregnant women or the basic health and hygienic needs of women. This legislation ensures that statewide jail standards include regulations for hygienic products, undergarments, and adequate nutrition for pregnant offenders, and prohibits the painful and dangerous practice of shackling during childbirth.

In addition, the bill updates Kentucky's archaic property crime statutes by raising the amount necessary to trigger a felony charge for theft from \$500 to \$1,000. With Kentucky's jails and prisons bursting at the seams, the Commonwealth can no longer afford to levy a felony conviction for stealing an iPhone.

The bill further seeks to encourage rehabilitation for low-level offenders starting earlier in the course of the justice system by codifying the Administrative Office of the Court's administrative release program. This program has been successfully using risk assessment tools to determine the risk alleged offenders pose to society before their trial date and ensuring the right people are detained while those who can safely maintain their jobs and housing can do so. Again, this is about making sure we are prioritizing detention and incarceration of serious criminals over those who pose no public threat or flight risk while awaiting trial.

Finally, Senate Bill 133 provides additional protections to victims of crime by expanding access to emergency orders of protection and interpersonal protective orders and allowing these life-saving tools to be provided in regional rape crisis centers and domestic violence shelters.

As we have seen in states that have pursued similar reforms, such as Texas, Mississippi, and Georgia, it is possible to protect the most vulnerable in our prison system and improve public safety outcomes by spending less money locking up low level offenders, all while crime rates decline. For these reasons, I urge you contact your senator and ask him or her to support Senate Bill 133 to make the Commonwealth safer and more prosperous while reducing the burden on your taxpayers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JP', written in a cursive style.

Jason Pye
Vice President of Legislative Affairs
FreedomWorks