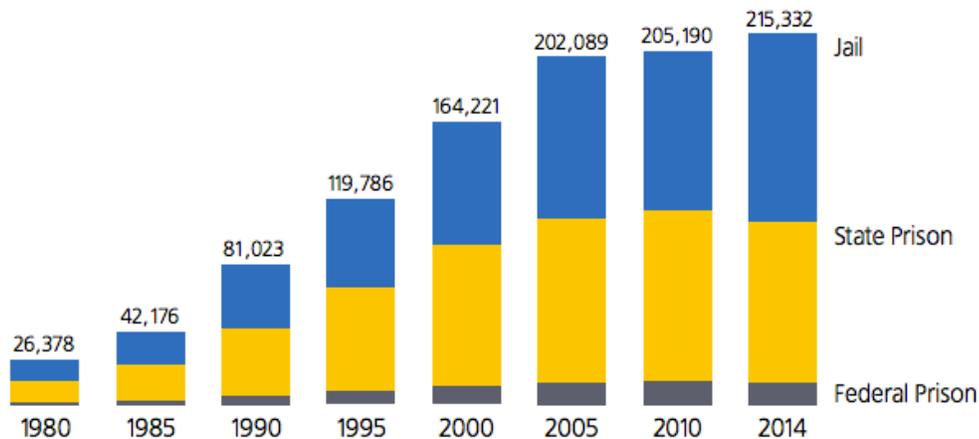


THE DIGNITY FOR INCARCERATED WOMEN ACT

Women are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. prison population. According to the American Civil Liberties Union, there are more than eight times as many incarcerated women as there were in 1980, increasing in number from 12,300 in 1980 to 182,271 by 2002. The criminal justice system has failed to adapt to this changing landscape, thus incarcerated women face systems and policies that are designed for men; prisons and jails are not equipped to provide resources or address the challenges incarcerated women face.

This increase in women's incarceration is due in part to heightened criminalization of drug use and limited access to drug treatment, as shown in the chart created by the Sentencing Project.

Rise in Women's Incarceration, 1980-2014



Sources: *Historical Corrections Statistics in the United States, 1850-1984*. (1986); *Prison and Jail Inmates Series*. (1997-2014) Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics; *Prisoners in 2014*. (2015). Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

The Challenges that Women Face in the Criminal Justice System are Unique.

According to The Sentencing Project, more than 60% of women in state prisons have a child under the age of 18 and more than 80% of women in jails are mothers. In addition, over 12,000 women annually are pregnant at the time of incarceration. These women are routinely subjected to dangerous and inhumane shackling during pregnancy and childbirth. Despite the fact that shackling pregnant women is degrading and unnecessary, only ten states have laws that

prohibit the practice. For incarcerated women, menstruation can be a demeaning experience. Intentionally limited access to menstrual products creates a dehumanizing barrier to inmate's health and security. Incarcerated women are forced to barter, ration, or even beg for these necessary healthcare items.

END THE
CRIMINALIZATION
OF
TRAUMA



In addition, nearly 6 in 10 women in state prisons have experienced physical or sexual trauma in the past. Lack of appropriate resources creates a cycle in which women and girls are criminalized for behavioral reaction to trauma. **For more information, see the National Action Campaign's brief on trauma informed services here.**

Women of Color are Significantly Overrepresented in the Criminal Justice System.

Like men of color in the criminal justice system, women of color are disproportionately incarcerated. According to The Sentencing Project, Almost two-thirds of incarcerated women are women of color; 44 percent of incarcerated women are black, 15 percent are Hispanic, and 5 percent are of other racial and ethnic backgrounds. This clear racial disparity points to biases and inequality prevalent in the U.S. criminal justice system.

What does the Dignity for Incarcerated Women Act Do?

U.S. Senators Cory Booker (D-NJ), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Richard Durbin (D-IL), and Kamala Harris (D-CA) introduced the "Dignity for Incarcerated Women Act" to reform the way women are treated behind bars.

1. Allows for better visitation policies for primary caretaker parents.
2. Bans the shackling and solitary confinement of pregnant women.
3. Provides pregnant women and mothers with access to drug counseling programming and parenting education.
4. Ensures that quality pads and tampons are provided to inmates free of charge.

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