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CONTACT

Malik Moore
Office of Representative Hart
(352) 214-8053
Malik.moore@myfloridahouse.gov

Representative Hart and Senator Jones Refile Ava's Law

Tallahassee, Fla. – State **Representative Dianne Hart (D- Tampa)** and **Senator Shevrin Jones (D- Miami Gardens)** have filed **HB 779** and **SB 730** respectively. This legislation creates processes to adequately provide care for pregnant women who are being held in custody. These bills have been titled “**Ava's Law**” in memory of **Ava Thompson**. Her mother, **Erica**, was denied necessary care while in custody at the Alachua County Jail and was made to give birth in a cell. The lack of care she received while in labor resulted in her newborn child passing away hours later at a local hospital.

Representative Dianne Hart issued the following statement, “I am honored to refile this important legislation here in the House. Erica Thompson continues to be in my prayers since the passing of her child and while this legislation will not bring Ava back, it will ensure that no other mother or child will have to experience what Erica and Ava did in that county jail.”

Senator Shevrin Jones added, “This legislation marks a crucial step forward in the treatment of pregnant women who are incarcerated in Florida. We must protect women when they are at their most vulnerable. By ensuring that every woman in custody has the right to a pregnancy test, we can avoid the tragic circumstances that befell Erica Thompson and her daughter Ava after whom this bill is named.

Today I am re-filing the ‘Protecting the Dignity of Women and Infants Act’ and renaming it ‘Ava's Law’ in the lost child's memory. Women are the fastest growing prison population in this country, and yet, they are treated shamefully. Accessible care ought to be a human right because all people, regardless of societal or economic status, deserve safe, healthy environments, access to basic necessities, and above all, dignity.”

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