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Representative Hart's Criminal Justice Reform Bills Head to the House Floor

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – State **Representative Dianne Hart (D- Tampa)** filed **House Bill 779**, Ava's Law, and **House Bill 1045**, the Certified Peer Specialist programs. **HB 779** creates process for pregnant women to petition the court for a deferral of their sentence until they have been able to give birth to their child. This bill has 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.

HB 1045 creates the Certified Peer Specialist Program in the Florida Department of Corrections to allow those currently incarcerated to become a certified peer specialist to help those who are battling with substance abuse issues. This legislation creates a pathway of gainful employment for those returning home.

Representative Dianne Hart said, "I am excited to have two important pieces of legislation headed to the House floor for consideration. These bills are important in the fight for meaningful criminal justice reform. It is my hope that this legislation will help to create a true system of correction and move our state forward.

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