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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

News Release

Date: April 20, 2021

NC Physician Groups Support Legislation for Incarcerated Pregnant Women

RALEIGH -- The North Carolina Medical Society (NCMS) and the North Carolina Obstetrical and Gynecological Society (NCOGS) support [NC House Bill 608 -- Dignity for Women Who Are Incarcerated](#) during the prenatal and postpartum period and urge lawmakers to pass this humane legislation to benefit both women and their babies.

"This proposal sets a crucial standard for how pregnant and post-partum women are treated while incarcerated," said NCMS President **Philip Brown, Jr., MD**. "Frankly, I shudder to think of the potential harm to women and their babies when these basic, humane protocols are not followed. This legislation is long overdue."

The number of women incarcerated in NC jails and prisons for non-violent crimes has dramatically increased in recent years. Often the treatment these women receive if they are pregnant is inconsistent with medical recommendations to keep the mother and baby healthy through labor and delivery. The proposal addresses the health needs of incarcerated women and their babies by codifying standards of care for women's health and perinatal care.

Addressing this issue has been a priority of the NCOGS for several years.

"As an obstetrician, I am pleased to support this legislation on behalf of our specialty and the patients we serve," said **Kerianne Crockett, MD**, member of the Society's board. "The provisions in this bill are evidence-based approaches to improving the care that incarcerated mothers receive. This legislation will improve the health and safety of pregnant mothers and their babies, without compromising the safety or security of those responsible for their custody or involved in their care. We applaud the legislature for supporting this measure and appreciate the support of our state's sheriffs."

This legislation would protect the health and safety of mother and baby by prohibiting shackling of pregnant women in the second and third trimesters, during labor and delivery and allowing only limited restraint for six weeks post-partum. Also, the bill insists mothers receive adequate nutrition to support their baby's health and welfare.

(more)

The proposal also allows mother and baby to remain together for 72 hours following birth, as recommended by pediatricians. Research shows continued contact between parent and child is associated with lower recidivism rates, reduced rates of babies entering foster care and improved odds mother and child will remain together long term. The Dignity for Women Who Are Incarcerated act addresses this by expanding opportunities for children to visit their mother and encouraging placement of children within reasonable proximity of the mother.

The Act also recognizes many incarcerated women are survivors of sexual assault and limits strip searches and inspections by male corrections officers and provides for additional training for officers to address the mental and physical health needs of pregnant women.

This proposal protects the dignity and health of the mother and the future health and well-being of her child. We encourage timely passage this legislative session.

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About the North Carolina Medical Society

The North Carolina Medical Society is the oldest professional member organization in North Carolina, representing physicians and physician assistants who practice in the state. Founded in 1849, the Society seeks to provide leadership in medicine by uniting, serving and representing physicians and their health care teams to enhance the health of North Carolinians.

About the NC Obstetrical and Gynecological Society

The North Carolina Obstetrical & Gynecological Society is the voice of Ob/Gyn physicians in North Carolina. Through education, advocacy, communications and professional relations, we represent our members' professional interests and promote excellence in patient care.