Advocates Battle Enhanced Criminal Penalties for Pregnant Women

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National Advocates for Pregnant Women (NAPW) and 99 other organizations and experts filed an amicus curiae (friend of the court) brief challenging the recent decision of a Tennessee federal court to add six years to a woman's prison sentence because she was pregnant while committing a crime, according to a NAPW press release.

Prosecutors in this case argued that Lacey Weld deserved extra punishment for conspiracy to manufacture methamphetamine because her drug addiction and exposure to dangerous "fumes" while pregnant put her unborn child at risk.

But advocates argued that the court's decision to subject women to harsher sentencing because of pregnancy is discriminatory, violates constitutional guarantees and establishes a dangerous precedent in the legal system. What's more, advocates charged that the court based Weld's sentence on medical misinformation.

Supporters of Weld's appeal include 100 medical and public health experts and organizations from across the country that fight for reproductive justice, women's rights, criminal justice reform, drug policy reform and civil rights. In addition, two HIV/AIDS groups — Positive Women's Network (PWN-USA) and SisterLove, Inc. — supported the brief.

Click here to read NAPW's full amicus brief.

Click here for a list of the organizations that endorsed the brief.

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