

# **FAMILY ISSUE FACT SHEET**

NO. 7 2023 (JANUARY 2023)

## **SERVE WOMEN ACT**

**HB 2417 HOV LANE; PREGNANT DRIVERS**

**HB 2427 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE; PREGNANT VICTIM; SENTENCING**

**HB 2500 SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIMS; FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

**HB 2502 CHILD SUPPORT; DATE OF PREGNANCY**

**HB 2530 SUBSTANCE EXPOSURE; PREGNANT WOMEN; NEGLECT**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Arizona law should value and serve pregnant women; it is in the best interest of the woman and the state. With that in mind, Arizona lawmakers have drafted five bills designed to combat some of the financial and physical obstacles women face when victimized or left to care for a baby alone.

These bills are designed to help victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, and substance abuse, among other challenges.

## **BACKGROUND**

Pregnant women often do not have the support system they feel they need to raise a child or bring the baby to term for adoption. In addition, pregnant women who are addicted to drugs often do not get the help they need to protect themselves and their babies from the ravages of substance abuse.

Civil societies should treat pregnant women with respect and compassion. State laws can hold those who victimize pregnant women accountable for violence against the woman and her unborn baby. Women who conceive due to rape should be compensated for the added expense of bringing the baby to term. And women receiving child support should begin receiving it as soon as it is confirmed she is pregnant to help cover the cost of prenatal healthcare and the necessities of parenting.

## **WHAT THE BILLS DO**

[HB 2417](#) qualifies a pregnant woman to use the HOV lane with a healthcare professional's documentation of pregnancy. Other states have similar bills, including Virginia, Utah, and Texas.

[HB 2427](#) holds a person guilty of aggravated assault if he or she commits a crime while having reason to believe the victim was pregnant. It raises the penalty from two to five years in jail. Other states, including Delaware, Ohio, and Utah have similar laws including increased penalties for those convicted of abusing a pregnant woman.

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[HB 2500](#) ensures a woman who conceived during a sexual assault receives compensation for healthcare expenses and economic support through the first year of the child's life.

[HB 2502](#) requires child support to be paid from the time of a positive pregnancy test confirmed by a licensed healthcare professional if that date is earlier than the divorce date, legal separation date, or court order date.

[HB 2530](#) requires licensed healthcare professionals who learn a pregnant patient is using dangerous drugs to refer her for treatment. The report may not lead to an investigation of abuse or neglect so not to discourage women from getting prenatal care or other healthcare.

## TALKING POINTS

- Pregnant women deserve additional protections from the state. Anyone who victimizes them should be held accountable for both mother and her unborn child.
- Helping sexual assault victims who become pregnant during the crime is both compassionate and in the best interest of the state.
- Healthcare professionals are the first line of defense for many pregnant women ravaged by substance abuse. They can help both mother and her unborn child, without fear of triggering a criminal investigation.

## CONCLUSION

Civil societies should treat pregnant women with respect and compassion. State lawmakers should ensure pregnant women get the help they need to protect themselves and their unborn babies, especially if they have been victimized. Those who abuse such women should be held accountable.