

THE GEORGIA SURVIVOR JUSTICE ACT **FACT SHEET**

Intimate partner violence and other forms of physical and sexual abuse trigger survival responses in victims that compel them to act out of desperation to protect themselves or their children. Coercion from abusive partners may force victims who fear for their lives to become a part of crimes committed by their abusers. The evidence shows that Georgia's criminal justice system must be updated to fully and fairly consider these dynamics and provide justice for domestic violence survivors.

MANY WOMEN IN PRISON ARE SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

- + Extensive research consistently finds that the vast majority of incarcerated women have experienced prior abuse, with 74% to 95% having experienced domestic or sexual violence.
- + A 2005 study of women entering Georgia prisons found that 78% had experienced physical abuse from their partner, 60% had experienced threats of being killed, and 81% reported five or more traumatic events in their lifetime.

MANY SURVIVORS ARE SERVING EXTREMELY LONG SENTENCES.

- + One study found that 30% of women serving sentences for homicide were protecting themselves or a loved one from physical or sexual violence.
- + From 2016-2025, The Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence (GCADV) documented around 200 cases of domestic violence survivors who are currently in prison. Over half (58%) are serving a life sentence or a virtual life sentence.

MANY SURVIVORS IN PRISON ARE MOTHERS WHO SHOULD BE HOME WITH THEIR CHILDREN.

- + 45% of women in Georgia prisons have at least one dependent, and 30% have two or more.
- + National research shows that the majority of mothers in prison lived with their children prior to incarceration, and 39% were the sole or primary caretakers of their children before being incarcerated.

SURVIVORS IN PRISON SUFFER FROM SERIOUS MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH ISSUES AS A RESULT OF THE ABUSE THEY ENDURED.

- + [81% of women in Georgia prisons](#) require some form of mental health treatment.
- + Studies have found that [incarcerated women are more likely to have suffered Traumatic Brain Injuries \(TBI\)](#) than incarcerated men, a flip from the general population.
- + The number of TBIs due to intimate partner violence is estimated to be 11 to 12 times larger than the number among athletes and military personnel combined.

INCARCERATING SURVIVORS WASTES TAXPAYER DOLLARS.

- + Since 2022, the number of women in Georgia's prisons has [risen by 27%](#) from 3,014 to 3,836.
- + Georgia [spends \\$25,006 per incarcerated person per year](#). The recent growth in female imprisonment alone is costing Georgia taxpayers \$21 million this year.

WHAT WOULD THE SURVIVOR JUSTICE ACT DO TO HELP?

[HB 582](#) would ensure that courts recognize the impact of domestic violence on a survivor who committed a crime as a result of abuse at trial and sentencing. Specifically, it would:

- Allow survivors to introduce evidence of abuse in cases where they used force against their abuser.
- Ensure survivors can present evidence of domestic violence to explain actions committed under duress.
- Grant judges discretion to depart from mandatory minimums and impose fairer sentences when domestic violence played a role in the offense.
- Allow currently incarcerated survivors to apply for a reduced sentence based on the new sentencing guidelines.

Sentencing people to prison for acts of self-defense or coerced actions undermines public safety, destroys families, and wastes taxpayer dollars. Georgia has already led the way in protecting victims by passing legislation to make the criminal justice system fairer for human trafficking victims. Now it can take that leadership further and join states like Oklahoma by standing with victims of domestic violence and passing the Georgia Survivor Justice Act.