



## **Complaint Filed re: Woman Wrongfully Shackled, Denied Healthcare, and Treated with Cruelty During Pregnancy, Labor, and Postpartum Recovery While Incarcerated in Pennsylvania**

*The complaint, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania by Women's Law Project and the Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project, outlines violations of Pennsylvania law, federal law, and the U.S. Constitution*

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**June 18, 2026 // PENNSYLVANIA:** Late yesterday, Women's Law Project (WLP) and the Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project (PILP) filed a complaint with the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania on behalf of plaintiff Nicole Lane, a Pennsylvania woman subjected to a horrifying sequence of cruel, unusual, and inhumane treatment during her pregnancy, labor, delivery, and postpartum recovery while incarcerated at Washington County Correctional Facility (WCCF) in Washington County, Pennsylvania.

"What happened to me while incarcerated at WCCF was one of the worst experiences of my life. I thought either my baby or I was going to die alone on the floor of a jail cell," **says plaintiff Nicole Lane.** "I am bringing this lawsuit so that no other pregnant person incarcerated at WCCF or under the supervision of the Washington County Sheriff's Department ever has to go through what I went through."

The case is *Lane v. Washington County et al.* The complaint is [here](#).

Ms. Lane was in her third trimester and suffering serious pregnancy complications when WCCF denied her necessary prenatal care and exposed her to inadequate nutrition and excessive heat. At 38 weeks pregnant, WCCF left Ms. Lane alone and unmonitored in her cell for over 24 hours while she exhibited symptoms of severe preeclampsia – a life-threatening condition.

Once WCCF finally transferred Ms. Lane to UPMC-Magee Women's Hospital, Washington County Sheriffs shackled Ms. Lane, a non-violent offender, to a hospital bed for hours of unmedicated labor and five days of postpartum recovery, a violation of the United States Constitution and Pennsylvania law. After returning to WCCF, Ms. Lane was denied postpartum care and medication necessary to treat substance use disorder.

“Our client suffered cruel, unusual, and inhumane abuse during her pregnancy, labor, delivery, and postpartum recovery,” **says WLP Supervising Attorney Jackie Perlow, co-counsel for Ms. Lane.**

“Defendants, including Washington County, PrimeCare Medical, Inc., and individual doctors, nurses, and sheriffs, violated her rights, endangered her life, and caused her significant and lasting distress and harm.”

The lawsuit seeks damages pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 for the deprivation of her rights as guaranteed by the Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments of the United States Constitution, and under the Americans with Disabilities Act, Pennsylvania’s Healthy Birth for Incarcerated Women Act, and Pennsylvania tort law. The Healthy Birth for Incarcerated Women Act, the state law that restricts the use of restraints on pregnant women, has been in effect since 2010 and was expanded in 2023.

In addition to the primary claims, Ms. Lane was denied an emergency contact and threatened with hospital transfer if anyone visited her while she gave birth or during her postpartum recovery. While handcuffed and holding her newborn daughter in bed, a sheriff threw her breast-milk pump on the floor, threatened to “take away” her baby, and screamed at her that she had no human rights.

Approximately 190,600 women are incarcerated in the United States and approximately 58,000 pregnant people enter U.S. prisons and jails every year, according to the Prison Policy Initiative.

“Jails in Pennsylvania cannot continue to ignore laws that protect incarcerated people simply because they disagree with them. They have a duty to provide incarcerated individuals with dignity and humane treatment, something Washington County denied Ms. Lane at every turn,” **says PILP Deputy Director Alexandra Morgan-Kurtz, co-counsel for Ms. Lane.** “No person should be shackled while their life is in danger.”

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