



Law Office of the
PUBLIC DEFENDER
Seventeenth Judicial Circuit

Howard Finkelstein • Public Defender

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May 3, 2019

Sheriff Gregory Tony
Broward Sheriff's Office
2601 West Broward Boulevard
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33312

Re: Childbirth in the Main Jail

Dear Sheriff Tony:

I am incensed and heartbroken after learning that a mentally ill client was forced to deliver her child alone in a jail cell. In the early hours of Wednesday, April 10, Tammy Jackson, who was full term and known to be so by jail and medical personnel, began complaining of contractions and asked staff for help. Instead of transporting Ms. Jackson to the hospital to deliver her child, staff attempted to contact an on-call physician at 3:16am. Hours passed as Ms. Jackson continued in labor, alone in an isolation cell. At 7:22am, staff was finally able to speak with the doctor, who advised that he would check on her when he arrived at the jail. One hour and 38 minutes later, Ms. Jackson reported she was bleeding but still she remained isolated in her cell, and no urgency was demonstrated by your staff. Six hours and 54 minutes after asking for help, a BSO tech notified medical staff that Ms. Jackson was holding her newborn baby in her arms, having delivered her baby without medication or the assistance of a physician. She was forced to deliver her baby alone.

Since the day of her arrest the previous month, the Broward Sheriff's Office was aware that Ms. Jackson was pregnant. She had been placed in the infirmary specifically so her medical issues could be monitored and addressed. Medical records indicate her baby was born at term; the birth was not premature or unexpected. Yet in her time of extreme need and vulnerability, BSO neglected to provide Ms. Jackson with the assistance and medical care all mothers need and deserve. Not only was Ms. Jackson's health callously ignored, the life of her child was also put at grave risk.

It is unconscionable that any woman, particularly a mentally ill woman, would be abandoned in her cell to deliver her own baby. Your staff did not protect either Ms. Jackson or her child. Despite their neglect and callous indifference, both Ms. Jackson and her child survived. It remains to be seen how this gross negligence will affect Ms. Jackson's already fragile mental health.

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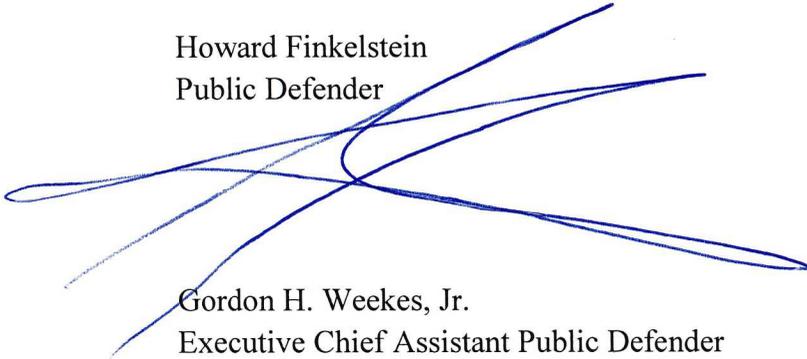
Chief Investigator:
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What happened to Ms. Jackson is outrageous and inhumane. I demand an immediate review of the medical and isolation practices in place in all detention facilities to ensure that no mother endures the ordeal Ms. Jackson survived.

Sincerely,



Howard Finkelstein
Public Defender



Gordon H. Weekes, Jr.
Executive Chief Assistant Public Defender