



## **Press Release**

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## **Montana Mother Asks Court To Remedy Mistreatment Of Pregnant Inmates By Detention Facility**

MISSOULA, MT — A Montana mother denied prescribed medication while serving time in jail for traffic violations asked a federal court today to require the Lake County Detention Facility to compensate her for the physical and emotional suffering she endured while in the facility's custody and to declare unconstitutional the denial of needed medical care to pregnant inmates. Bethany Cajúne is represented by the ACLU of Montana and the American Civil Liberties Union's national Reproductive Freedom Project.

"I was afraid my baby might die because Lake County Detention Facility was denying me treatment," said Bethany Cajúne. "No one should go through what I went through. I've brought this case to make sure it doesn't happen to another woman."

In March 2009, Cajúne voluntarily reported to Lake County Detention Facility to complete an outstanding short-term sentence for traffic violations. At that time, she was approximately four to five months pregnant, raising five small children at home and attending GED classes four days a week. She was also nearing a year of successful participation in a medication-treatment program for a diagnosed addiction to opioid drugs. Despite attempts by Cajúne's treating physician and drug treatment counselor to ensure that Cajúne continue receiving Suboxone, a medication that suppresses withdrawal symptoms, the facility denied her this care. As a result, Cajúne suffered complete and abrupt withdrawal, experienced constant vomiting, diarrhea, rapid weight loss, dehydration and other withdrawal symptoms, all extremely dangerous during pregnancy. Despite repeated warnings of the serious risk abrupt withdrawal posed to her health and pregnancy, including miscarriage, the facility continued to deny Cajúne her medication. It took the intervention of a public defender to secure Cajúne's release after nine days of being denied care so that she could resume the treatment.

"Lake County Detention Facility knowingly put Bethany Cajúne's health and pregnancy in danger when they refused to give her doctor-prescribed medication, even as they witnessed her suffering severe withdrawal symptoms," said Jennifer Giuttari, Staff Attorney with the ACLU of Montana. "Women don't give away their right to medical treatment or their right to have a healthy pregnancy when they are incarcerated. The Eighth Amendment was created to protect that right, but in this case Bethany's constitutional right to medical care was violated."

The Lake County Detention Facility's treatment of Cajúne violated established standards of care for pregnant women who are receiving treatment for opioid addiction. Medical experts, the federal government, and the

National Commission on Correctional Health Care uniformly advise that pregnant patients should not be withdrawn from opioid treatment.

The case is *Cajúne v. Lake County*. Lawyers on the case include Betsy Griffing, ACLU of Montana Legal Director, and Jennifer Giuttari, ACLU of Montana Staff Attorney; and Kasdan, Staff Attorney, and Talcott Camp, Deputy Director, ACLU Foundation.

This is the first complaint filed through the ACLU of Montana's new Montana Prison Project, which seeks to ensure humane treatment of Montana's jail and prison inmates and to make sure they are provided with required medical and mental health care.

To read the complaint: [www.aclumontana.org](http://www.aclumontana.org)

To watch a video about the case: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kdeZ7qHWJSA>