

Department of Community Justice



TO: Chair Prozanski and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary
DATE: April 4, 2017
RE: Support for SB 895

Chair Prozanski, Co-Chair Thatcher, and members of the Committee, my name is Truls Neal. I am Deputy Director of Multnomah County Department of Community Justice. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 895.

Multnomah County is one of five counties participating in the current Family Sentencing Alternative Program Pilot. So far, approximately 30 individuals have participated in our program.

Multnomah County strongly supports SB 895 because it will eliminate some of the statutory restrictions to program participation. Currently, barriers include disqualifications due to crime and because an individual is pregnant and not yet considered to be parenting. We could serve many more participants, and possibly even have a waitlist for this program, if these barriers were removed.

The most important aspect of the program is that participants are able to continue parenting their children in the community, after an initial assessment and while receiving intensive supervision and wrap-around services. Multnomah County manages these individuals in the community with the help of our public safety partners.

Multnomah County's Family Sentencing Alternative Pilot Program is located within our Family Services Unit. This unit provides supervision through a multi-disciplinary team (MDT), working closely with child welfare, human services, health services, and mental health agencies. Services include alcohol & drug, mental health, trauma, and culturally specific treatment as well as parenting classes. Additionally, participants are paired with parenting mentors; children have access to their own mentors, if needed. Participants can meet with mentors and PPOs in their own homes.

Based on our experience, the Family Sentencing Alternative Program clearly addresses the needs of these individuals and their families. As research shows, children who can remain with their parents are at lower risk of entering the child welfare and juvenile justice systems and have better outcomes overall.

In summary, I respectfully request that you support SB 895 so that more offenders can participate in this program, benefiting them, their families as well as the community at large.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Submitted by:

Truls Neal, Deputy Director
Multnomah County Department of Community Justice