



POLK COUNTY

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March 27, 2019

Hon. Rep. Jennifer Williamson, Chair
Hon. Rep. Chris Gorsek, Vice-Chair
Hon. Rep. Sherrie Sprenger, Vice-Chair
Members of the House Committee on Judiciary

Re HB 2244-2


Dear Chair Williamson, Vice-Chair Gorsek, Vice-Chair Sprenger, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of HB 2244-2, which expands the CourtCare pilot program in Polk and Marion counties to Deschutes and Jackson counties. CourtCare provides a safe and nurturing place for children while their parents or guardians attend court proceedings or other court-related business.

As District Attorney, I have participated in numerous proceedings in which parents, whether due to financial or other circumstances, have had to bring their young children with them to court. The issues discussed in open court can be very trauma-inducing and wholly inappropriate for children to hear. Unfortunately, due to lack of child care for these parents, their children are forced to remain in the courtroom or sit unattended in the hallway while court proceeds. I personally participate as Polk County's Drug Court prosecutor and see on a weekly basis the benefit CourtCare provides to our participants so they do not have to choose between their treatment and their children's safety.

In my experience, one of the most common obstacles people face in meeting their conditions of probation or other court-ordered obligations is the lack of available, affordable, child care. As a prosecutor, I have a responsibility not only to seek justice by holding offenders accountable, but to be supportive of those individuals that are working to be successful by removing unnecessary roadblocks. Since September of 2017, over 1000 children have been served by Polk County's CourtCare program, removing at least some of those roadblocks. HB 2244-2 will further that success throughout Oregon.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Aaron Felton
District Attorney