

House Committee on Judiciary
April 1, 2019

House Bill 2258

Chair Williamson and members of the committee, my name is Leola McKenzie and I am the director of the Juvenile and Family Court Programs Division (JFCPD) in the Office of the State Court Administrator for the Oregon Judicial Department. JFCPD promotes innovative programs, best practices, and legal resources to enhance the effectiveness of court services for vulnerable children, adults, and families.

The -1 amendments for House Bill 2258 expands the toolbox for four counties by establishing family dependency treatment courts. Family dependency drug courts are for parents who require treatment for a substance abuse disorder and who are involved with the child welfare system because of child abuse or neglect. This specialty court program combines intensive judicial monitoring with multidisciplinary interventions. By offering treatment, accountability, and supportive opportunities for safe reunification, these programs decrease the amount of time children are in foster care.

Parents engaged in Family Dependency Treatment Courts will have all the treatment providers associated with their case working together to holistically treat the challenges the families are facing. Parents will have their services tailored to their individual needs and family circumstances. The Family Dependency Treatment Court builds upon the best qualities of each system through collaboration ... no longer will a family have to wait weeks or longer to voice a barrier they are facing because they will receive weekly, continuous support and feedback so no time is wasted. For a child who is in foster care or a parent whose child is in foster care, every day counts.

The -1 amendments to House Bill 2258 create evidence-based Family Dependency Treatment Courts in local counties with all of the resources needed to support parents –

- Sufficient judicial officers and staff to not only handle these complex cases, but to also bring the court system and services providers together in a collaborative environment to best meet the needs of each individual parent.
- Parent/child representation model that ensures attorneys have the time and resources to support all juvenile cases in the community,
- Dedicated child welfare staff to coordinate specialty court services and serve as a liaison for caseworkers,
- Funding for drug and alcohol treatment and other support services that are necessary to optimize parental success.

The -1 amendments HB 2258 also includes an evaluation component with outcomes closely linked to child welfare outcomes. We will be monitoring our progress and reporting to the legislature on outcomes of the program.

OJD supports the -1 amendments of this bill.

Thank you.