

Youth, Rights & Justice

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

February 3, 2020

Chair Sanchez
Vice-Chair Bynum
Vice-Chair Sprenger

Re: Support for HB 4131: Family Preservation Project

Members of the House Committee on Judiciary,

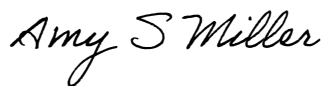
As Oregon's defense firm dedicated exclusively to juvenile law, YRJ is court-appointed to represent children in foster care, parents whose children have been removed, and youth in the juvenile justice system. We are a team of 34 attorneys, legal assistants, and other specialists. We represent over 800 clients each year. Roughly 80% of our clients are in the child welfare (foster care) system, with the balance in the juvenile justice system. All of our clients come from low income families. Most have suffered significant trauma and many have physical, mental health and/or substance abuse issues. Approximately 45% are children of color.

Over our four-decade history, we have also worked with the systems supporting vulnerable children, youth and families, changing them for the better. Because of our unique position handling court-appointed juvenile cases, we often see the same systemic problems and we work to change the policies that contribute to these problems. Through this, our work has touched hundreds of thousands of Oregonians.

YRJ encourages the continued funding of the Family Preservation Project. The program, focused on helping incarcerated mothers develop parenting skills and strengthen bonds with their children, reduces the collateral consequences of parental incarceration on children, families, and the community. We've represented children and parents served by the FPP and have witnessed, first-hand, how the project mitigates the harm caused to children by parental incarceration.

Research shows that the parent-child bond and the quality of the child's family and support system play significant roles in the child's ability to succeed in life.¹ Furthermore, data suggests that parents who receive the type of services provided by FPP experience reduced recidivism.² Therefore, programs like FPP are critical to preserving child well-being and promoting successful re-entry for the incarcerated parent.

Sincerely,



Amy S. Miller
Executive Director

¹ <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/hidden-consequences-impact-incarceration-dependent-children>

² <http://www.parentinginsideout.org/outcome-study/>

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