



February 5, 2020

Chair Sanchez, Vice-Chairs Bynum and Sprenger and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon, we respectfully request your support for H.B. 4131, which would provide stable and sufficient program funding for the Family Preservation Project, to support children and justice-involved women and parents that identify as gender non-binary, with services that can help maintain family bonds, reduce the impact of trauma, prepare family members for reunification and provide other critical resources that support our families.

At NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon, we advocate for the legal right of all individuals to choose if, when, and how they want to start and raise a family. These rights are inconsequential, however, if an individual cannot also access high quality health care, education and training opportunities, family support programs, and a living-wage job.

Between 1978 and 2015, the rate of women entering the criminal justice system in Oregon more than tripled.¹ Women entering the criminal justice system may also be experiencing a variety of other challenges, including poverty, trauma, domestic abuse, housing insecurity, and barriers that can prevent access to health care services; and for women of color, many of these factors are often exacerbated by institutional racism.² Time away from work and social networks can cause multi-generational harm and has a disproportionate impact on the health and economic status of mothers and their families. **Children with an incarcerated mother are more likely to be placed in foster care and more likely to be incarcerated themselves during their lifetime.**³

Currently there are 20,000 children in Oregon with a parent who is currently incarcerated. 80% of people who are incarcerated at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility are parents. Research has shown that strong family support is a key factor in successful re-entry for parents. The Family Preservation Project currently provides critical support to up to 200 women per month with three tiers of support for families: intensive family reunification, a family resource center, and speaker series. The parents who participate in the intensive program are able to engage in therapeutic visitations, transition planning, caregiver support, and biopsychosocial assessments and interventions. Over the last 10 years, only two women that have participated in the intensive support program have returned to Coffee Creek.

¹ https://www.prisonpolicy.org/graphs/OR_Women_Rates_1978_2015.html

² https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/women_overtime.html#drugs

³ <https://www.epi.org/publication/mass-incarceration-and-childrens-outcomes/>

Mass incarceration directly restricts a significant population in our state from the ability to choose to raise families in safe and healthy conditions. Black, Indigenous, and other people of color receive disproportionately long sentences. And we know that our corrections system often denies basic rights⁴ such as access to reproductive health care access and regular family contact and support. This can have long term impacts, including a family member's ability to make a living in order to care for themselves and their children.

By ensuring the Family Preservation Project receives stable and sufficient funding, Oregon can take a first step in helping children and families remain connected and mitigate the lasting impact of trauma. NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon and our partners are committed to reforming our correctional systems with a lens of gender-justice for all. We believe H.B. 4131 is a critical first step in the right direction to ensuring all families of Coffee Creek can access the resources they need. We urge you to support this bill.

Thank you,

Christel Allen
Political Director, NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon

⁴ <https://www.naacp.org/criminal-justice-fact-sheet/>