



Smart policies for today's families.

March 1, 2021

Testimony in Support of House Bill 3096

Dear Chair Bynum, Co-Chairs Noble and Power, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

Family Forward Oregon supports House Bill 3096, which will direct the Oregon Department of Administrative Services and a contracted third party organization to conduct a trauma-informed, gender and culturally-responsive assessment of Coffee Creek Correctional Facility. The purpose of this assessment is to establish a baseline for a strategic planning process, policy recommendations and improved protection of incarcerated women at CCCF.

As an organization that supports women, mothers, and caregivers of all backgrounds, we believe that HB 3096 is necessary to the health and well-being of all women and non-binary individuals in custody. Literature shows that women follow unique pathways into crime and present risk factors that signal different intervention needs than men. A larger proportion of justice-involved women experience¹:

- Sexual violence and continue to be vulnerable to victimization in correctional settings
- Domestic abuse and related trauma-- women with histories of abuse and neglect are 77% more likely to be arrested as an adult than their peers who were not abused
- Higher rates of mental illness and substance abuse
- Greater levels of poverty and employment instability than men

Black, Indigenous, and Latinx women in particular are more likely to be incarcerated and face additional unique challenges while in prison.

A recent survey of women incarcerated at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility (CCCF) done by the Oregon Justice Resource Center (in partnership with Portland State University), shows widespread reports of past domestic violence and childhood trauma. Sixty-nine percent of women surveyed there said past trauma led to their involvement in the criminal justice system.²

¹ <https://womensjustice.net/the-facts>

² <https://ojrc.info/herstory-oregon-survey>

Gender responsive interventions have been proven to achieve decarceration, improved safety and more positive outcomes for women³. These approaches can and should be applied at the macro level in terms of how corrections systems are designed and function, and at the facility and community levels in terms of how facilities and community corrections agencies operate and deliver services.

HB 3096 is the outcome of a Gender Responsive Workgroup facilitated by the Legislature's House Judiciary Committee and led by Representative Tawna Sanchez. Family Forward has had the privilege of participating in these conversations and listening to women directly harmed and impacted by Coffee Creek Correctional Facility's problematic environment.

The lack of gender responsive and trauma-informed practices in correctional facilities is perpetuating cycles of abuse, trauma, victimization and harm among incarcerated women. At CCCF, 80% of women who are incarcerated are mothers. Family Forward believes that if we want to break the cycle of intergenerational trauma among families impacted by the carceral system in Oregon, we must name and identify the root causes. We can start by appropriately addressing the unique needs of women, parents, and caregivers who are currently incarcerated.

We urge your support for HB 3096.

Sincerely,
Lisa Kwon, Policy Manager
Family Forward Oregon

³ <https://womensjustice.net/the-facts>