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MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Sen. Prozanski, Chair

FROM: Aaron Knott, MCDA Policy Director

SUBJECT: Testimony in support of SB 720

DATE: 3/2/2021

As prosecutors, the Multnomah County District Attorney's Office is committed to doing what we can to ensure that any incarcerated person receive meaningful opportunities at rehabilitation. An incarcerated person faces many challenges upon release – housing and employment are often tremendously more difficult to obtain for those with serious criminal records, and these obstacles are often more challenging for previously incarcerated women. Incarcerated women are very frequently victims of physical and sexual abuse, and experience disproportionate rates of trauma-driven pathologies such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

At the same time, trauma is intergenerational. A child with an incarcerated parent experiences lower levels of academic success and a higher frequency of delinquency or criminal justice involvement, and they are far more likely to become seriously involved with the criminal justice system later in life.

Senate Bill 720 targets this intergenerational trauma by maintaining, solidifying and deepening the relationship between incarcerated women and their children, maintaining a crucial bond which serves the dual purpose of providing the incarcerated person with a deeply motivating connection to their son or daughter while helping the child to hold their connection to their parent throughout their term of incarceration. This reduces the odds that the incarcerated person will reoffend after release and decreases the likelihood that the child will grow up to become criminally involved themselves. Senate Bill 720 is both a smart financial investment which will avert future prison costs and, simply put, the right thing to do. We urge its passage.

Contact: Aaron Knott – Policy Director (aaron.knott@mcda.us).