



Oregon moms and caregivers fighting for gender, economic, and racial justice.

To: House Committee on Judiciary
From: Family Forward Oregon
Date: February 23, 2023
RE: In Support of HB 2731

Chair Kropf, Vice-Chairs Andersen and Wallan, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 2731. Family Forward Oregon is committed to advancing policies that support mothers, women, and families to succeed, both in the workplace and at home. We work to ensure that Oregon is a place where all families can be economically secure and have the time they need to take care of each other. Our organization strongly supports HB 2731, which will provide sufficient and stable funding to the Family Preservation Project (FPP).

FPP is a critical program that helps mothers and children overcome cycles of poverty, trauma, and intergenerational involvement in the criminal justice system. Since 2010, the program has impacted thousands of mothers and their families through services and interventions including family reunification efforts, legal support, and therapeutic visits, and more. Each month, the Family Preservation Project serves approximately 150 women and 375 children. Without FPP, children of incarcerated parents are more likely to be placed under the care of the Department of Human Services.

Women, in particular, are entering the criminal justice system in increasing numbers due to the effects of poverty, trauma, unsafe housing, abuse, low levels of economic capital, discrimination and institutional racism. According to an article by the Statesman Journal, the number of women imprisoned in Oregon has nearly tripled over the past 20 years, even though women are not committing more frequent or more serious crimes¹.

Over 68,000 children in Oregon have had an incarcerated parent in their lifetime and 80% of women who are incarcerated are mothers. 84% of mothers had at least one child living with them before incarceration. With the help of FPP, over the last decade, only about 5% of FPP's participants have returned to prison. The current statewide average for women returning to prison is 13-15%.

Family Forward believes that if we want to break the cycle of poverty and incarceration in Oregon, we must look for ways to better support women and families far before any involvement with the criminal justice system. But we also desperately need to change what happens to women within the criminal justice system.

¹<https://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/news/crime/2017/02/16/oregon-faces-skyrocketing-female-prison-population/98012786/>

The Family Preservation Project provides resources and support allowing women to maintain a strong, positive relationship with their children and family, which is the number one predictor of successful re-entry. A proven model for strengthening families and communities, the Family Preservation Project helps mothers take ownership of their lives and changes the lives of children with an incarcerated parent, reducing trauma and providing support they do not receive anywhere else.

Continuing to fund this program is a matter of urgency for incarcerated mothers in Oregon and their children. We urge your support for HB 2731.

Thank you,

Lisa Kwon
Policy Manager
Family Forward Oregon

