

May 4, 2023

Dear Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez and members of the Committee,

Please fund the Family Preservation Project/HB 2731. The bill creates in statute and funds the Family Preservation Project (FPP), which mitigates the impacts of parental incarceration on kids in Oregon that have a parent in prison. The program also secures almost a dollar-for-dollar match from private funds AND saves the state at least that much in other costs related to incarcerated moms and their children.

FPP has impacted the lives of thousands of Oregon mothers and children, providing services to help incarcerated women and their children overcome cycles of poverty, trauma, and intergenerational involvement in the criminal justice system.

I support FPP, because I've had the opportunity to hear from woman and children who have been impacted, and also because I designed the evaluation plan through which FPP will be able to demonstrate that impact. In working with Jessica Katz and FPP staff members to connect program activities to evaluable outcomes, I was able to gain a deep appreciation for the breadth and depth of what the program does to support women, children, and families through its work. In researching whether similar programs were available across the country, I also came to understand that due to the longevity of FPP, it has established itself as one of the best examples of this kind of programming in the country.

As a child welfare researcher who is familiar with evaluating programs that target a range of mental health, social behavior, and educational outcomes, I am confident that FPP warrants stable investment to ensure its ongoing success. We know from research that this kind of individualized, multi-dimensional programming reduces the impact of incarceration on mothers and children in profound ways—FPP is simply doing the kind of meaningful and restorative work with mothers and children that it takes to interrupt the cycle of intergenerational criminal justice involvement, poverty and addiction, and reduce the risk of recidivism.

Funding FPP ensures fewer children are placed in foster care, incarcerated moms are less likely to go back to prison, and children of participants are exhibiting successful outcomes academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally.

Thank you for your leadership and for your commitment to Oregon. Please support HB 2731 so that these critical supports and services do not go away.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jennifer Blakeslee".

Jennifer Blakeslee, PhD, MSW

Portland, OR