

TO: Ways & Means Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez, and Members of the Committee
DATE: May 3, 2023
RE: SUPPORT THE FAMILY PRESERVATION PROJECT/HB 2731

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 work as a volunteer art teacher for the program and have seen first-hand the impact it has on incarcerated mothers and their families. Before I became involved in this program, I didn't know how difficult the prison system makes it for mothers to stay in touch with their children. I didn't know that simply retaining custody of one's children once incarcerated is something that often requires dedicated advocacy and special legal knowledge. I did know, of course, how devastating this separation is for both mothers and kids. When I saw how routinely and carelessly it happens in prison, I was shocked.

Family Preservation Project keeps moms and kids together. They advocate for both parties inside and out of prison. They pay for phones calls. They facilitate transportation. They provide resources inside that help to interrupt cycles of crime, abuse, and addiction. They provide support and community outside to make transitions easier for mothers and their kids. FPP has made all the difference for thousands of families.

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,

Carson Ellis
Tualatin, OR