

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 if the Family Preservation project wasn't a part of my life than it would have turned out so much different. The support and love I got from the women in FPP changed my world in so many ways. In 2011 I was sentenced to 4 years at coffee creek and that point my daughter was 2.5 years old. It was a traumatic time for us all.

DHS went from wanting to terminate my parental rights, to 6 months later agreeing to a durable guardianship. This would not have been possible without the help of the staff in FPP encouraging me to advocate for myself, as well as helping me navigate the systems involved. The relationship that I was able to start building in a healthy, loving, supportive way with my daughter while incarcerated was with the loving support of my FPP family. This growth our family was able to make through my incarceration was nothing less of a miracle. Not only did this program support our relationship building, but it supported all the family members connected to my daughter. Helping with gas cards to get her here, school supplies during that time of year, summer camps and dance classes. These were all huge parts of helping the tribe that was supporting my daughter. There was also help in connecting me with the caregivers, as this was a huge part in our growth and cohesiveness as well.

This program is like no other in the world and it needs to be supported to continue to grow. The trickle effect it has is beautiful and even almost 9 years after my release from incarceration I do everything I can to help support and advocate for this program, as does my daughter.

Fast forward these 8.5 years since my release, my daughter and I have our own 2 bedroom apartment and an amazing relationship. She's almost 15 and a healthy, well rounded teenager. I have graduated with my bachelors degree and am looking into grad school. I am currently working at Harmony academy, the only recovery high school in Oregon. Since my release I haven't picked up a drink and I work a strong recovery program. I've diligently worked toward bettering myself, as well as my ability to be the best mom to my daughter, on a day to day basis. Lastly, funding FPP helps to actualize the Bill of Rights for Children of Incarcerated Parents. It is critical that we as a community and as a state recognize the needs and prioritize the rights of children of incarcerated parents from the time of their parent's arrest through incarceration. We must do better.

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,

Ashley Dorety  
Tualatin, Oregon