

Submitter: Andrea Metheney
On Behalf Of: Family Forward Oregon
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2555

To: House Committee on Judiciary
From: Family Forward Oregon
February 19, 2025
RE: In Support of HB 2555

Chair Kropf, Vice-Chair Chotzen, Vice-Chair Wallan, and members of the Committee,

My name is Andrea Metheney and I am the Legislative Coordinator for Family Forward Oregon.

The Family Sentencing Alternative Program (FSAP) reduces recidivism and keeps families together. FSAP diverts pregnant mothers, recent parents, and primary caregivers away from a term of incarceration and into strict community supervision. HB 2555 will eliminate the sunset clause and make FSAP a permanent program; and allow for true primary caretakers of children (e.g. a grandmother or grandfather is the one taking care of the child, but is not the legal guardian) to receive services through this program;

We are particularly enthusiastic about the proposed changes in HB 2555, which will enable true primary caretakers of children to access FSAP services. This expansion is crucial, as it acknowledges that caregiving responsibilities often extend beyond biological parents. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other relatives frequently take on primary caregiving roles, yet may not be legally recognized as guardians. By broadening the definition of primary caretaker, HB 2555 ensures that these dedicated caregivers can also benefit from FSAP's supportive services.

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 and children within the criminal justice system.

This change is especially important for families who rely on non-traditional caregiving arrangements due to various circumstances and challenges. By recognizing and supporting these caregivers, we can help maintain family stability and prevent further trauma for children.

Furthermore, Family Forward Oregon believes that FSAP's success is a testament to

the effectiveness of community-based approaches in promoting public safety and reducing recidivism. By investing in programs like FSAP, we can create safer communities while also addressing the root causes of crime, such as poverty, lack of education, and unemployment.

In conclusion, Family Forward Oregon strongly supports HB 2555 and its efforts to strengthen and expand the Family Sentencing Alternative Program. We urge you to pass this bill, ensuring that more families can benefit from FSAP's life-changing services and that our communities continue to thrive. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Andrea Metheney
Legislative Coordinator
Family Forward Oregon