

I am writing you today to ask for your support of HB 4131, which creates in statute and funds the Family Preservation Project (FPP). FPP is a program at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility for incarcerated women, their children and their caregivers. The program has impacted the lives of thousands of Oregon mothers and children, providing services to help incarcerated women overcome cycles of poverty, trauma, and intergenerational involvement in the criminal justice system. Sufficient, stable funding will ensure these families get the support they need.

I have volunteered with FPP for two years and have been fundamentally changed by what I've seen in these women and children. The moms in the program work harder at being good parents than the majority of us on the outside. Nothing can undo what has landed them in prison, but these women are doing the work it takes to break the cycle of criminal behavior. FPP provides education and support in a way few other programs do. The greatest tragedy of the program is that -due to financial restraints- it isn't available for every incarcerated mother who strives to do better.

I have witnessed the simple, yet profound power of their interactions during the unlimited contact and mealtimes the visits provide twice monthly. I have watched these mothers make "glitter from dirt" for their children with the food available to them at mealtimes, just to feel like they can provide an enjoyable meal for their child. I have seen mothers navigate their children's emotions and behaviors, then assess their parenting skills with their peers after the visit. I have been moved by seemingly simple acts such as reading a story to a child, or having a child show their mom the new gymnastics trick they've learned - daily interactions for parents on the outside, many of which we do without much thought, hold an entirely different value once seen against this backdrop.

As you likely know, children of incarcerated parents experience great trauma, loss, and shame. FPP provides a unique model for helping these kids cope with their experiences. The program changes the lives of these children by providing support they often do not receive anywhere else.

Every day that this program goes unfunded, real families suffer. Over 68,000 children in Oregon have an incarcerated parent and 80% of women who are incarcerated are mothers. The Family Preservation Project provides an immediate need that these women and children will not find elsewhere. Funding this program is a matter of urgency for thousands of Oregonians.

While this bill requests funding, ultimately FPP saves the state money by providing savings across a range of public services; from reducing foster care and corrections needs, to the long-term costs saved in social services by interrupting the cycle of incarceration, poverty, and trauma, this program's impact reaches beyond just lives of the mothers and children served.

While it should be enough that FPP betters the lives of the many children whose worlds have been turned upside down by their parents incarceration, while also helping women learn how to function in society without criminal behavior, and become better mothers, ultimately this program makes all of society better.

I'm including a few photos I was permitted to take during my visits so you can see the real human impact FPP has made. **Please support HB 4131** and help ensure his program can continue to change lives for the better.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Posy Quarterman
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