



Children First for Oregon

Speaking Up for Kids Since 1991

TO: House Business and Labor Committee
FROM: Tonia Hunt, Executive Director
RE: House Bill 3025
DATE: March 25, 2015

The statistics are startling.

Over 75% of female prisoners in Oregon are mothers.

Over 7,500 inmates in the state are parents.

In 2013, nearly 500 children in state care had an incarcerated parent.

Right now, over 1 in 5 of Oregon's children—more than 172,000 kids—live in poverty.

So, why does Children First for Oregon support HB 3025, “banning the box”? Because we know that stable housing and employment are the keys to successful re-entry for those who have been released from state custody. Because, with 93% of felons returning to the community, those are the people who so many of our children will rely on for food, shelter, and a sense of well-being.

The “box” is a spot on many employment and housing applications in Oregon that asks whether the applicant has been convicted of a crime or been incarcerated. This hurdle makes it difficult to find work and housing even as the economy is improving. Research affirms that a criminal record reduces the likelihood of a job callback by nearly 50%. Those figures become compounded for Oregon's minority children when there is such disproportionate representation of African-Americans in the Department of Corrections.

With HB 3025, you have a chance to reduce barriers and create an opportunity for job applicants. You can give Oregonians who've served their time a second chance at earning a paycheck, simply by making it illegal for employers to use job application forms to ask about criminal history or disqualify an applicant from employment because of a prior conviction unless the conviction is job-related.

The legislation is incredibly important to the economic stability of Oregon's children and families and is featured in the 2015 Children's Agenda. Please help make a difference for them.

Sincerely,

Tonia Hunt
Executive Director