



House Judiciary Committee  
Re: Public Hearing on HB 3503

March 31, 2015

Dear House Judiciary Committee Members,

We are adding our written public testimony in full support of House Bill 3503 which is currently under consideration by this committee.

Mercy Corps Northwest has been working with incarcerated women at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility since 2007. We also operate the Reentry Transition Center in Portland which welcomes over 1000 people a year who are returning to our community from state and federal prison or county jail. In both these contexts, we are supporting individuals who are working to return to their homes and neighborhoods as productive, contributing members of the community. When individuals walk the talk and demonstrate by their actions that they have grown, changed and desire a new direction in their life, they should be supported. Their success in achieving their goals is in complete alignment with their own best interests, the best interest of their families, their community and of Oregon taxpayers.

In our work we consistently see the desire to care for their children as one of the strongest motivators of behavior change in incarcerated and formerly incarcerated parents. The key ingredients which are often missing are knowledge and support. HB 3503 will help convicted and incarcerated parents who have demonstrated their desire to be better parents to improve the strength of their families and give their children a better future by providing structure, accountability, knowledge and support to be better parents and create stronger families.

#### HB 3503

- Reduces the cost of incarceration to the state while providing needed and targeted support to parents to strengthen their families.
- Maintains accountability for past actions while providing structure, knowledge and support to build better futures for their children.
- Reduces the financial and emotional costs associated with foster placement
- Can help avoid the documented trauma for children—and its subsequent negative health consequences—of having an incarcerated parent.

As the State of Washington has demonstrated, this is an effective and efficient use of tax dollars with positive outcomes that benefit the convicted individual, his/her family, the community and our state. Please support this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Douglas Cooper".

Douglas Cooper  
Assistant Director, Mercy Corps Northwest