



March 31, 2015

Representative Jeff Barker, Chair  
Members of the House Judiciary Committee  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Chair Barker and Representatives,

Children First for Oregon's mission is to make long-term systemic change by advocating for the adoption of policies and programs that strengthen families and keep children healthy and safe. We are a data-driven organization and, as such, cannot ignore these sobering statistics:

- 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 foster care had an incarcerated parent

So how do we move the needle and make real change for Oregon's kids?

House Bill 3503, the Family Offender Sentencing Alternative pilot project, gives us the opportunity to quantify programs that can help to improve parenting and reduce recidivism in this and future generations. We know that certain parenting programs, such as home visiting, are *proven* to change the lives of offenders and their children. In one study, comprehensive home visiting, including parenting classes, reduced the likelihood of mothers having another conviction by two times. Perhaps more importantly, their daughters were *nine times* less likely to have a conviction by age 19 than the children of those offenders who did not receive the same training.

Children First also supports the sideboards enumerated in the bill, including the exclusion of those offenders with sex offenses, as well as allowing judges to determine which families would best benefit from the alternative sentencing offered in HB 3503.

If we are to make Oregon the best place to be a kid, we must address *all* children and their families, and look to the education, economic security, health and safety programs that will help to achieve that goal. Children First for Oregon supports HB 3503 and asks for your support, too.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tonia Hunt", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Tonia Hunt