

TO: Chair Barker and members of the House Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Scott Taylor, Director, Multnomah County Department of Community Justice

DATE: March 31, 2015

RE: Support for HB 3503

---

My name is Scott Taylor. I am Director of Multnomah County Department of Community Justice. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 3503.

My goal in testifying today is to share what Multnomah County is currently doing to serve families with at least one parent who is under supervision. Our Family Services Unit works directly with these families, supervising over 400 offenders annually. Many (70%) of these families have children under the age of ten. Our Family Services Unit provides supervision through a multi-disciplinary team effort, working closely with staff from child welfare, human services, health services, the Department of Corrections and mental health agencies.

On the juvenile side, we are a partner in the Community Healing Initiative (CHI). This program is a partnership between DCJ, the County Department of Human Services, the Latino Network, and Portland Opportunity Industrialization Center (POIC), and serves a targeted number of high risk youth on probation and their families. This program provides access to culturally specific services and interventions, including counseling, employment, and housing.

Because of the range of programs and services we already provide, Multnomah County is in a very good position to accommodate the population targeted with HB 3503. We have existing programs, such as the Family Services Unit, and the infrastructure necessary to meet the needs of this population. In addition, because of the implementation of the Multnomah County Justice Reinvestment program, we have a system in place to manage these people in the community. With the help of our public safety partners, we provide front-end assessments, wraparound services, and intensive supervision for offenders being released early from prison as well as those diverted from prison and sentenced directly to probation. In short, we would be able to leverage existing programs, partnerships, expertise and resources to successfully serve these families.

Based on the latest numbers from our Justice Reinvestment program, we are currently working with 28 women and 253 men who were released on Short Term Transitional Leave (STTL). A pilot project implemented in Multnomah County would build off the STTL process established as a part of the Justice Reinvestment program. Our pilot could accept those parents who meet the qualifications

outlined in HB 3503 and are eligible for STTL. To maximize resources, save money, and address the looming overcrowding issue at Coffee Creek, we would propose extending the transitional leave time from 30 and 90 days to six months.

Currently, about 200 women in prison are from Multnomah County. Based on existing caseloads, we estimate at least half of these women have children and could be eligible for this program. Implementing this program could provide immediate relief for the current crowding issue.

Based on our experience of working with offenders and their families, the Family Sentencing Alternative Program will only serve to better address the needs of these offenders and their families. As research shows, children who can remain with their parents are at lower risk of entering the child welfare and juvenile justice systems and have better outcomes overall. We look forward to continuing the partnerships we have developed with our public safety partners and community-based organizations to provide better outcomes for these families.

In summary, I respectfully request that you support HB 3503.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Submitted by:

Scott Taylor, Director  
Multnomah County Department of Community Justice  
501 SE Hawthorne Blvd., #250 Portland, OR 97214  
503.988.3701