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Re: Testimony in Support of SB 939 April 7, 2015, Hearing Room B, 3 pm Senate Human Services and Early Childhood

Chair Gelser, Vice-chair Olsen, and committee members:

The National Organization for Women (NOW) – Oregon strongly supports SB 939. This bill is modeled after the very successful Family Preservation Project (FPP) that was, until recently, offered to inmates and their children at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility.

The long term goal of FPP was to stop intergenerational criminality. While it would take a very long longitudinal study to accurately assess if the FPP was successful in achieving that goal, it certainly appears that it was successful in improving the likelihood that the children of incarcerated parents involved in the program would not become a part of the criminal justice system. There are certain markers that are predictive of the likelihood that a child will become involved in criminal activity as s/he gets older; these markers include poor school attendance, test scores significantly below grade level, among others. Almost all of the children who participated in FPP post-test met goals of good school attendance and academic accomplishment; prior to their involvement in the program they were not doing as well.

Additionally, through the FPP the parent-child bond was maintained, the inmates learned better parenting skills, most of the inmates attained educational and work goals, and most had acquired housing upon release. Significant is the fact that there has been a ZERO recidivism rate among the inmates who completed the FPP.

While the program outlined in SB 939 is not identical to the FPP, it is clearly modeled after it. Even if it is a little more costly than other programs to administer, the long term advantages to society of having parents able to care for their own children when released from prison, of having a low to nonexistent recidivism rate, and of having a high probability of stopping the cycle of intergenerational involvement in the criminal justice system certainly saves money in the long run.

On a personal note, I am a retired Circuit Court Judge. Frankly, I have often been disappointed in the lack of success of many of the prison programs. The FPP is the first program I've seen to have a zero recidivism rate. I was dumbfounded when I heard that the Department of Corrections was curtailing

this very important and successful program. In addition to representing NOW – Oregon’s support for SB 939, I also am personally very much in support of it.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Nancy Campbell (Mead)
NOW – Oregon
Senior Judge