



REP. JESSICA VEGA PEDERSON
Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 939
Senate Committee on Human Services and Early Childhood
April 7, 2015

Chair Gelser, Vice-Chair Olsen, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 939. This bill deals with an important subject that doesn't always merit much discussion when talking about our correctional system – the importance of fostering and maintaining strong relationships between incarcerated parents and their children.

SB 939 creates much-needed programming for children of incarcerated parents and measures its effectiveness in terms that make sense for the nature of this type of programming, including school attendance, grade-level reading achievement and developmental achievement for the children involved and recidivism, release to stable housing, and increased child contact for the parents, in addition to the basic.

We know these programs to assist children of incarcerated parents help reduce the likelihood of children being involved in child welfare, Oregon Youth Authority, and even the correctional system in the future. These programs have powerful and potentially long-lasting impact on families and can reduce the devastating legacy of intergenerational incarceration too many families live with. SB 939 provides a proven, powerful incentive for parents to turn their lives around.

The Family Preservation Project (FPP) was an effective Department of Corrections program that assisted children of incarcerated parents, reduced recidivism, and supported bonds between incarcerated mothers and their children. SB 939 would fund a program that is similar to the Family Preservation Project, to be administered by a nonprofit to help reduce the overall cost of the program. This change in administration also provides nonprofit resource connections in local communities and Medicaid reimbursement for some services. I urge you to support SB 939 as a means of interrupting the intergenerational cycle of criminal justice involvement, poverty, and addiction and to serve the best interest of children of incarcerated parents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jessica Vega Pederson".

Representative Jessica Vega Pederson
House District 47