



Legislative Testimony

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

June 17, 2015

The Honorable Chip Shields, Co-Chair
The Honorable Jennifer Williamson, Co-Chair
Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety

RE: House Bill 3503A

Co-Chairs and members of the committee, I am Jeremiah Stromberg, Assistant Director of the Community Corrections Division for the Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC). I am here to testify in support of HB 3503A and answer any questions.

What the Bill Does:

HB 3503A directs DOC to establish a Family Sentencing Alternative Pilot Program in partnership with a variety of stakeholders, including the counties and the Department of Human Services. The pilot would establish a diversion program whereby eligible primary parents would be diverted from prison and serve a term of probation in order to continue their primary parenting role.

Background Information:

Public safety is the primary focus of DOC. We must first and foremost hold offenders accountable for their actions. Next, our goal is to reduce the likelihood that individuals will commit another crime after release. To do this, we look to what works in corrections, which is a combination of programming, education, treatment, and family connections. This is critically important because we know that without intervention, without treatment, and without education and other supports, the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors that lead to criminal behavior will continue to pass from parent to child and on to the next generations. If we are going to improve the lives of children and keep them safe and healthy, if we are going to reduce poverty, stop crime, and make communities safer, we must find effective methods of intervening in and breaking the intergenerational cycle of criminal behavior. To do that, we must look to the needs of the children of incarcerated parents.

The Family Sentencing Alternative Pilot Program does just that. Its approach allows families to receive wrap-around services that focus specifically on strengthening family bonds, building parenting skills, and addressing the underlying causes of the parent's criminality.

Specific to DOC, our agency has built a strong foundation of collaboration with our public safety partners, including county community corrections, the sheriffs, district attorneys, and non-profit organizations. If this bill passes, we are committed to working collaboratively to ensure we continue to hold individuals accountable, while also strengthening family connections.

Requested Action:

In conclusion, DOC supports HB 3503A, and looks forward to working in collaboration with all stakeholders on implementation should this bill pass.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Submitted by:

Oregon Department of Corrections

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