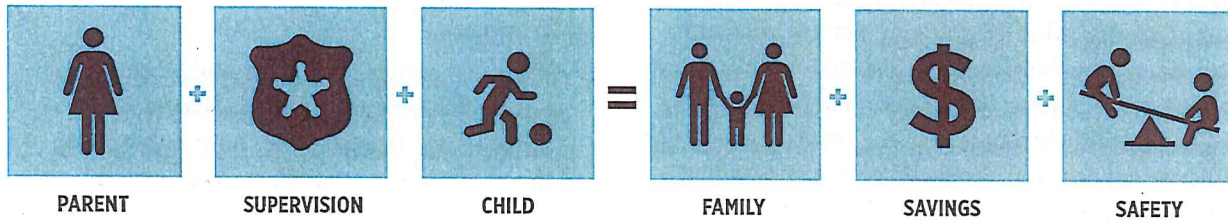


# Strong families Safe communities



House Bill 3503 holds parents convicted of non-violent crimes accountable, while strengthening their bond to their children and increasing the stability of their families. This is also an investment in children and expands their opportunities to succeed. By keeping families together, Oregon can break the cycle of crime and increase public safety with stronger families and safer communities.

## The Problem

When parents, especially mothers, are incarcerated, the effects on families and our communities can be devastating. Imprisonment tears apart families and dramatically disrupts the lives of children, who themselves are more likely to become involved in the juvenile justice or adult prison systems. For Oregonians, these broken policies mean wasted tax dollars and communities that are less safe.

Oregon faces an immediate crisis. Women are the fastest-growing population of prisoners in Oregon, and our state's only women's prison, Coffee Creek Correctional Facility, is dangerously close to maximum capacity. Most of the women at Coffee Creek are incarcerated for nonviolent offenses, and an overwhelming 75% are mothers. Unless we take action, Coffee Creek will soon exceed its capacity, and the Department of Corrections will be forced to reopen a previously closed prison. That will mean a dramatic increase in taxpayer dollars wasted on imprisoning women who pose no public safety threat and more children unnecessarily separated from their parents.



75% of  
incarcerated  
women are  
mothers



Oregon Coalition  
for Safety and Savings

For more information contact Shannon Wight at  
(503) 896-6708, [shannon@safetyandjustice.org](mailto:shannon@safetyandjustice.org)

**House Bill 3503** prioritizes children and public safety.

The **Family Sentencing Alternative** allows parents convicted of certain nonviolent offenses to be assessed for intense supervision and appropriate services while remaining united with their children in the community.

### The Solution

There are ways to hold parents who have been convicted of crimes accountable without disrupting families and wasting public resources. An innovative program piloted in Washington State is now being considered by the Oregon Legislature. This program allows some parents of a minor child to serve all or a portion of their sentence in the community, under intense supervision, if they have been convicted of certain nonviolent offenses. This approach provides parents with mental health and addiction treatment, life skills training and counseling, and other services designed to strengthen families and address problems that contributed to the parents' involvement with the justice system.

### Why Is this Important?

Over 20,000 children in Oregon have at least one parent who is incarcerated. These children face higher rates of poverty, household instability, and a host of other risk factors that increase the likelihood that they too will become involved in the juvenile justice or adult prison system one day.

- 80% of Oregon's children with an incarcerated parent need higher levels of services than other children.
- 41% of children in Oregon's foster care system have a parent who has been convicted of a felony.
- 23% of children with fathers who have been incarcerated will be expelled or suspended from school compared with only 4% of all other children.
- Black children are 700% (seven times) more likely to have a parent in prison than white children.

### Impact on Recidivism

In addition to holding people accountable for crimes they commit, our system must do a much better job of preventing future crime. In Washington State's program:

- Of the 120 people who successfully completed its **Family Sentencing Alternative** between July 2010 and January 2015, only eight (6.7%) have committed a new felony offense; and

### Costs Avoided

Smart policy should deliver the best possible public safety outcomes and the best possible results for Oregon's families and children.

- Keeping children with their parents, even in a supervised setting, is the best way to avoid the expense of foster care—upwards of \$26,000 a year per child in Oregon.
- Per family, the Washington program costs one-third of what it costs to send a parent to prison: **\$31 a day** to supervise parents in its Family Sentencing Alternative, compared to approximately **\$90 each day** to house an adult in prison.



Oregon Coalition  
for Safety and Savings

For more information contact Shannon Wight at  
(503) 896-6708, [shannon@safetyandjustice.org](mailto:shannon@safetyandjustice.org)