

Kate Brown
Governor



Oregon Commission for Women
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OCFW Testimony in support of SB 242
April 3, 2017, 1 pm, HR D
Senate Committee on Human Services

Chair Gelser, Vice Chair Olsen, and Senators Dembrow, Knopp and Monnes Anderson,

The Oregon Commission for Women, in its role as advocate for the women of Oregon, strongly supports the Family Preservation Project (SB 242). The OCFW has long recognized that the systemic impacts of maternal incarceration on the children of female inmates are devastating, as the children face both long- and short-term social, economic, academic, and psychological barriers to their success. 75% of Oregon's female inmates are parents. The mothers' imprisonment in and of itself, compounded by separation from their children, is particularly damaging. The problem is exacerbated by the lengthy mandatory minimum sentences for specified nonviolent drug and property crimes stemming from Measure 57. In these cases parental rights are often terminated, causing children to depend upon publicly supported social welfare systems.

SB 242 provides funding for the Family Preservation Project (FPP), which helps to reduce the collateral damage of children of incarcerated mothers housed in Wilsonville's Coffee Creek Medium and Minimum Correctional Facilities and upon release. The FPP takes an organic approach to ameliorating the effects of prison through parenting programs and other wraparound services designed to educate, support, and mentor mothers and their children. Programs and services for the incarcerated and newly released mothers and their children are led by volunteers, former FPP participants, and community partners.

The FPP has been shown to reduce recidivism by providing inmates a continuum of care including post-release access to supportive legal and social services, and by educating women in parenting skills and bonding with their children. This education reduces the likelihood of reoffending. Thanks to the lower rates of recidivism, the children of FPP alumni are more likely to live with their mothers and less likely to require expensive social services.

The Family Preservation Project and its eight component programs including its Family Resource Center, Enrichment Activities for Children, Intensive Family Reunification and others, estimates that it serves 7000 women and children each year. SB 242 will improve the quality of life and future prospects for the success of female inmates and their children, and ultimately for all citizens of Oregon.

The Oregon Commission for Women urges an Aye vote on The Family Preservation Project, SB 242.

Dr. Adrienne Ochs, OCFW Commissioner

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