



April 3, 2017

Senator Sara Gelsler, Chair
Members of the Senate Human Services Committee
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Chair Gelsler and Senators,

Children First for Oregon is the primary research source for child wellbeing data in Oregon. Along with the YWCA and our partners in United for Kids, we work every day to make Oregon the best place to be a kid. We advocate for the structures, policies and programs that can protect the economic security, education, health and safety of all children in Oregon.

Children are disproportionately affected by the arrest and incarceration of a parent. Children who witnessed an arrest of a household member were 57% more likely to have elevated posttraumatic stress symptoms compared to children who did not witness an arrest.¹ At every point in the process from arrest through trial, conviction and incarceration, the adults in the process must be aware of how these adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) can permanently affect kids and seek to reduce the impact on them. This awareness can be as simple as recognizing that children have rights and that they must be protected.

SB 241 enumerates those rights in a way that can inform every participant in the process: to be protected from additional trauma when their parent is arrested; to be informed of the arrest in an age-appropriate manner so they can understand what is happening; to be heard and respected by decision makers when decisions are made about them; to be cared for in the absence of their parent in a way that prioritizes the child's physical, mental and emotional needs. These and the other common-sense rights enumerated in the bill have the potential to truly protect kids' physical and mental health and reduce the damage to them.

We urge you to support SB 241 to reduce the traumatic effects on the children of incarcerated parents. Thank you for your work on behalf of Oregon's kids.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth Cushwa". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Elizabeth Cushwa
Strategic Director

¹ Phillips, S.D., & Zhao, J. (2010). The relationship between witnessing arrests and elevated symptoms of posttraumatic stress: Findings from a national study of children involved in the child welfare system. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 32, 1246 – 1254