



April 3, 2017

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

Chair Gelser 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, including the approximately 20,000 children in Oregon who have an incarcerated parent.¹

Half of incarcerated parents plan on living with their children upon release, so it is in the state's best interest to help these families to break the cycle of recidivism and incarceration. Visitation between incarcerated parents and their children is essential to maintaining the parent-child bond that is jeopardized when a parent is incarcerated.² When over 75% of female prisoners in Oregon are mothers, the mother-child bonding that is facilitated by the Family Preservation Project can truly make a difference in both the child and the parent's future. The Family Preservation Project is an evidence-based program that provides parenting education and encourages robust engagement in the child's life.

FPP has been integral to reducing recidivism, keeping kids out of the foster care system and promoting grade-level academic achievement. The return on investment is calculable. Children First for Oregon supports not only the requested allocation, but an increase to serve more families more intensively.

We urge you to join us in supporting SB 242. 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 "The Children of Incarcerated Parents Project", Oregon Dept. of Corrections, 2003

² OREGON COMMISSION FOR WOMEN Report on Incarcerated Parents in Oregon: Prison Nurseries and Community-Based Alternatives, Problematic Foster Care Laws, and Parenting Programs for Incarcerated Fathers Emlyn Foxen March 2016