

April 5, 2017

The Honorable Jeff Barker, Chair
The Honorable Andy Olson, Vice-Chair
The Honorable Jennifer Williamson, Vice-Chair
House Judiciary Committee Members

Re: House Bill 3380

Dear Chair Barker and Members,

On behalf of the Oregon Justice Resource Center, I respectfully request your support for HB 3380.

The Oregon Justice Resource Center (OJRC) is a public interest law firm that represents justice-involved individuals and advocates for criminal justice reform in Oregon. We operate and administer several distinct projects that provide direct legal assistance to Oregonians who would otherwise not have access to legal services.

I have the privilege of directing the OJRC's Women in Prison Project. The goals of the Women in Prison Project are to ensure that the criminal justice system treats women fairly, protects their health and safety, and makes it possible for them to successfully rejoin their communities when they are released. Through this project, I provide civil reentry legal services to women incarcerated in Coffee Creek Correctional Facility (CCCF) and hear directly from incarcerated women and formerly incarcerated women about their intersection with the criminal justice system.

Justice-involved mothers often talk with me about their children and describe deep concern for ongoing challenges their children face because of their incarceration. It is a terrifying and confusing experience for children when they are separated from their mothers as a result of an arrest or incarceration. Mothers have shared stories of how their children were suddenly and permanently moved into another household – sometimes with family members who do not want to care for them or in foster care. Some of their children have run away from their new homes, began doing poorly in school, and showed other signs of shutting down and feeling ashamed of their mother's incarceration.

Furthermore, incarcerated mothers with DHS involvement are also at higher risk for losing parental rights of their children, which has long-lasting negative outcomes for parents and children.

The Family Sentencing Alternative Program (FSAP) allows qualified parents to remain united with their children in the community and provides parents with services and supervision they

need to strengthen their relationships with their children and increase family stability. By allowing for intensive community supervision to hold offenders accountable, FSAP not only reduces prison usage but also redirects children out of the state foster care system.

FSAP is a smart alternative to incarceration that takes into account a defendant's individual circumstances and the children and families that are impacted by incarceration. The Oregon Justice Resource Center supports forward thinking alternatives to incarceration such as HB 3380 which preserves the Family Sentencing Alternative Program and allows additional qualified parents to participate.

We strongly urge you to support HB 3380

Sincerely,

Julia Yoshimoto
Attorney and Project Director
Women in Prison Project and Reentry Law Project
Oregon Justice Resource Center