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April 4, 2017

TO: House Judiciary Committee

Rep. Jeff Barker, Chair

Rep. Andy Olsen, Vice Chair

Rep. Jennifer Williamson, Vice Chair

Rep. Chris Gorsek

Rep. Mitch Greenlick

Rep. Ann Lininger

Rep. Bill Post

Rep. Tawna Sanchez

Rep. Sherrie Sprenger

Rep. Duane Stark

Rep. A. Richard Vial

RE: HB 3380

Dear Chair Barker and members of the committee:

We are writing in support of HB 3380, which we believe will appropriately extend an already demonstrably successful program approved by the legislature in 2015. In the first two years, according to reports we have heard, 75 women and 139 children have been kept together because of this program. At the same time, the early reports are that diversion is working at keeping communities safe. This is not too surprising, because we know that the property crimes women commit are often the result of addiction, which in turn has been driven by abuse in their own backgrounds. The addiction does not get treated in prison, nor does traditional policy address the root causes of that addiction. Both the addiction and its roots can and are being given a primary focus in the Family Sentencing Alternative Program.

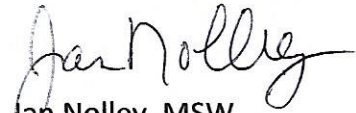
What is important to us is that this bill will expand the scope of the program in carefully calibrated ways, eliminating the exclusion for pregnant women, and adding a provision for transitional leave that will reunite more women with their children earlier. This means that more children will be raised with custodial parents, keeping them out of or at least minimizing the inevitable instability of foster care. We believe that the approach offered by HB 3380 then, can also offer benefits for the next generation as well, especially in communities of color which are disproportionately affected by current incarceration policies.

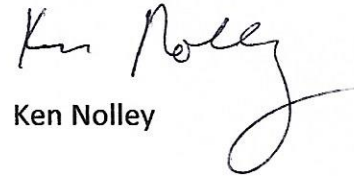
Finally, we believe that HB 3380 offers a substantial budgetary benefit to the state in that even the modest expansion it will provide will reduce pressure on the overcrowded women's prison at Coffee Creek. Given the relatively small number of women incarcerated in comparison to

men, even reductions of a few dozen beds can be significant in pushing back the need for opening another women's facility.

To us, this bill makes enormous sense. We hope that you will agree and send it forward.

Sincerely,

  
Jan Nolley, MSW

  
Ken Nolley