



May 15, 2017

Senator Floyd Prozanski, Chair
Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Chair Prozanski and Senators,

Children First for Oregon is the primary research source for child wellbeing data in Oregon. With 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 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 The entire process, from arrest through trial, conviction and incarceration, places children at risk for adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) that permanently affect them. Family Alternative Sentencing helps children, not just their parents.

The Family Alternative Sentencing Program provides intensive supervision and services, including: active drug and alcohol treatment, mental health care, life skills classes and parenting education classes. These wrap-around services hold the parent accountable, keep them engaged in the community and, most importantly, help their children. While you have heard other bills addressing Family Alternative Sentencing, HB 3380 will allow the program to reach those for whom it was intended—those families most at risk. It will ensure more children remain connected to their parents and receive the support they need.

Over 75% of women in prison in Oregon are mothers and, in 2013, nearly 500 children in state care had an incarcerated parent. HB 3380 can help to curtail the number of children in foster care, while giving families the tools they need to reduce recidivism and protect their kids' physical and mental health.

We urge you to support HB 3380 to reduce the traumatic effects on children and promote their families' health. Thank you for your consideration and your work on behalf of Oregon's kids.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elizabeth Cushwa", written in a cursive style.

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