

YWCA IS ON A MISSION

March 9, 2021

Janelle Bynum, Chair
House Committee on Judiciary
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Bynum, Vice-Chairs Noble and Power, and Members of the Committee,

As one of the oldest and largest women's organizations in the nation, with 2.6 million members across 300 local associations, the YWCA of Greater Portland has been serving Oregonians for over 110 years, while evolving to meet the changing needs of the women we serve. However, our core mission has not changed: eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, dignity and freedom for all.

One of our five key areas of work is the Family Preservation Project at the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility. The Family Preservation Project provides services to help incarcerated women and their children overcome cycles of poverty, trauma, and intergenerational involvement in the criminal justice system. Part of this work is built around the fact that the vast majority of women in prison have complex trauma histories, which contributes to complex medical needs. The vast majority of women in custody have themselves suffered from multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) and, as we know, a significant score on the ACES scale yields poor health outcomes, from diabetes to hypertension to early death.

Though women represent the fastest growing segment of our incarcerated population, they were not the population in mind when many correctional policies and practices were developed. Specifically, correctional facilities may not be adequately resourced and supported to meet the unique medical needs of women in their care and custody. The coupling of complex trauma and complex medical and mental health needs that women in custody suffer places an enormous burden on the Oregon Department of Corrections.

Efforts to address this issue, like those in HB 3035, are important steps in creating a healthcare system that can adequately serve women in custody. This legislation presents the opportunity to provide DOC the resources and support that is required to provide the best and most comprehensive care to the women in their care and custody.

Thank you,

Susan A. Stoltenberg
Susan Stoltenberg
CEO, YWCA of Greater Portland

Jessica Katz
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Director, Family Preservation Project

eliminating
empowering
ywca

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