

# YWCA IS ON A MISSION

March 23, 2021

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

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

The YWCA is the oldest and largest women's organization in the world and in the United States. The YWCA of Greater Portland has been serving Oregonians for over 110 years, while evolving to meet the changing needs of Oregon women. In fact, our core mission has not changed: eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all. The YWCA is also the oldest provider of domestic violence and sexual assault services in the United States, having done so since the late 1800's.

Today, our work includes the Family Preservation Project (FPP), an effort for women incarcerated at CCCF that promotes individual and system level change to reduce the collateral consequences of parental incarceration on children, families, and the community. While a study of the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility suggests 65% of incarcerated women are experiencing domestic violence at time of arrest, we believe nearly 100% of those incarcerated have suffered domestic and sexual violence, but may have so "normed" it that they don't define it as domestic violence or sexual assault. Our observations include clear effects of trauma and control asserted through domestic and sexual violence among those incarcerated. Many survivors who are not incarcerated also have arrest records that cause challenges in locating housing and employment due to the activities of their abusive partners.

We also know that children who witness domestic violence are at elevated risk of school failure, system involvement and repeating the violence in their own relationships. For those survivors who are incarcerated, this further traumatizes the children of survivors, who then suffer the loss of a parent, often tumbling into unstable, even unsafe conditions. You cannot separate sentencing a mother from the fact you are therefore sentencing the children, a truth acknowledged by the state in the adoption of a Bill of Rights for Incarcerated Children in SB 241 in 2017.

HB 2825 would require courts to consider at sentencing evidence of domestic violence and would give the court discretion to impose a lesser sentence in certain circumstances. While not currently asked to inform the sentencing or pre-arrest process, we have requested it in our partnerships with the police, district attorneys and courts and would welcome that opportunity as both a domestic violence provider and experienced service provider to incarcerated mothers and their families. Please support HB 2825.

Thank you,

*Susan A. Stoltenberg*

Susan Stoltenberg  
CEO, YWCA of Greater Portland

eliminating  
empowering  
**ywca**

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