



Legislative Testimony

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

February 27, 2023

The Honorable Representative Jason Kropf
Senate Committee on Judiciary

Subject: House Bill 2731

Chair Kropf and members of the committee, my name is Larry Bennett, and I serve as Assistant Director of the Correctional Services Division for the Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC). I am providing testimony on House Bill (HB) 2731.

What the Bill Does:

HB 2731 directs the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission (CJC) to establish, in collaboration with DOC, a Family Preservation Project (FPP) "pilot" program at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility (CCCF), to be administered by YWCA of Greater Portland. It further appropriates an unspecified amount of money to be distributed to continue to fund the pilot program for an additional eight years. It requires the CJC to perform an analysis of the FPP and to biennially report analysis results to the Legislative Assembly beginning September 15, 2026.

Background Information and Impacts:

DOC is a strong proponent of connecting incarcerated parents with their children, and in partnership with Portland Community College, started what became the Family Preservation Project (FPP) at CCCF in 2002. After operating for 12 years, a rigorous statistical analysis of the program's outcomes was conducted. Not only did the analysis reveal FPP was not cost-effective, but it was also found to be ineffective in reducing redivision. Therefore, based on those study findings and in compliance with ORS 182.525, which requires DOC to spend at least 75 percent of state moneys on evidence-based programs, DOC discontinued its funding of the program.

DOC absolutely shares the goals outlined in the bill, to increase protective factors and reduce the trauma experienced by children of incarcerated parents and increase successful reentry from prison to healthy families. As a proponent of making and strengthening the bond between incarcerated parents and their children, DOC has proactively increased the number and quality of those connections in the last 13 years through evidence-based programs such as Parenting Inside Out, Parenting Inside Out Phase II, providing trauma-informed training to DOC staff, and by making visiting spaces more family friendly and providing enhanced visiting events like family picnics. And while DOC can no longer fund the program for the previously stated

reasons, the FPP has been able to continue providing its services to incarcerated mothers and their children at Coffee Creek's minimum-security facility through other funding.

If this legislation passes, DOC needs to clarify the expectations placed on our agency as detailed in Section 1 of the bill. It is our understanding, from previous communications with the YWCA of Greater Portland, that FPP space requirements identified in this bill will not exceed the space DOC currently provides for FPP services at Coffee Creek. When FPP returns to Coffee Creek, this will include the office space, classroom, and twice monthly visiting spaces in the minimum-security prison provided before COVID.

Finally, this bill does not require the CJC to evaluate the effectiveness of the program until September 2026. However, the pilot program as proposed, with only slight modifications, has been operating for over a decade and there should be ample existing data to begin reporting earlier. Like the legislature and YWCA of Greater Portland, DOC is eager to learn if the program has become effective in reducing recidivism.

We appreciate and recognize the passion for FPP and are pleased to see this support for incarcerated parents and their children. As mentioned in my opening, the goals of this program are shared by DOC, and we will be proactive partners in this effort.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Submitted by:

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