

Representative Lisa Reynolds (HD34)
Oral Testimony - HB 2731
House Judiciary Committee
2/27/2023

Good morning again Chair Kropf, Vice-Chairs Andersen and Wallan, and members of the committee.

For the record, my name is Lisa Reynolds. I am the State Representative for HD 34.

Like the last bill, I am proud as Chief Sponsor of HB 2731, the Family Preservation Project bill, to say that this too has earned bi-partisan sponsorship and carries on the work of former Representative Rachel Prusak, along with Representative Courtney Neron, Representative Tawna Sanchez and many more - including colleagues of ours on the other side of the building.

A version of this bill has come before the Legislature several times, each time with a sunset on funding. To guarantee the future of the Family Preservation Project for children and families with incarcerated parents, HB 2731 would codify the program in statute.

My colleagues will speak to this program's impact shortly, but I would like to begin by painting a picture of the current state of families with incarcerated parents in Oregon. Approximately 84% of incarcerated women are mothers, the majority of which have two or more children. Though most facilities don't collect data on pregnancy status, the Department of Justice (DOJ) estimates that upwards of 25% of incarcerated women are pregnant or are mothers of infants. In total, 68,000 kids in Oregon who have an incarcerated parent.

The persistent negative effects of parental incarceration on children are well-documented and substantiated by long-term academic research.

There is so much we can- and must- do to improve the situation for children with incarcerated parents. It starts by helping adults in custody be successful parents while incarcerated and upon reentry.

Remember, most incarcerated parents return to taking care of their children upon their release. Let's use the time inside to help that parent be successful during AND upon their return to caring for their children.

This is where Family Preservation Project (FPP) steps in. I would like to describe a few of the programs that help mitigate the strains of incarceration on families:

Tier 1: The Intensive Family Reunification Program provides 1:1 wraparound resources for families with children who have higher needs- academically or emotionally. Participants in this tier are provided with coordinated services that connect school resources, therapeutic resources, and enrichment activities, as well as a support group and resource navigators.

Tier 2: The Family Resource Center connects participants to a variety of supports including donated legal representation, Oregon Department of Human Services case management, individual coaching sessions, and group parenting classes.

Tier 3: Includes other support services - including guest speakers and peer support.

HB 2731 would promise a secure future for this work, by codifying these supports into law. These supports create positive affirming experiences for parents, while providing emotional support to the child and child's caretaker. This all improves the chance for successful parenting upon reentry and will lower recidivism rates.

I will make one quick comment about the financial aspect of this bill. It seeks to secure \$650,000 per biennium through 2031. This is a strong and critical investment by this state. Not only are those dollars leveraged for a nearly 1:1 match from private funds, but we know that when one mom is incarcerated and her two children are placed in state care, we are investing \$100,000 per year in that one family. As shown in previous years, the Family Preservation Project helps dozens of children maintain placement with family, rather than being placed into DHS care, saving the state from paying approximately \$30,000 per year per child. This is just one of the upstream cost savings the State can achieve with this type of systemic and strategic investment in the health and well-being of children in our state.

Let's guarantee that parents can be present and invest in their child's life roadmap to their fullest capacity. This is how we provide children with the most sturdy foundation for a healthy future.

I yield to my partners on this bill to share with you their lived experiences and how they were impacted by FPP.