

May 3, 2023

Senator Elizabeth Steiner, Co-Chair  
Representative Tawna Sanchez, Co-Chair  
Joint Committee on Ways & Means  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

PLEASE SUPPORT THE FAMILY PRESERVATION PROJECT

Dear Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez & Members of the Committee,

Please fund the Family Preservation Project/HB 2731.

I visited my mom in prison for 18 months at FPP visits. These are different than regular visits. At regular visits, there were guards watching you and I had to be quiet and behave a certain way, kind of like I was at school. It was scary and I remember my mom didn't seem very comfortable and didn't hug me as much. At FPP visits, my mom was who I always remembered. We would cuddle and play. She would laugh and smile. She would brush my hair, and we would eat lunch together. I made friends with other kids and we got to do art projects together. I also fell in love with making slime. I remember being terrified before the first visit with my mom, and I was scared she was being hurt. Because of FPP visits, I learned my mom was safe and the prison became my second home. I understood my mom was there temporarily because she had made poor choices, but that she would be coming home to me one day. When my mom came home it was very natural, and I was so happy. I was not scared of her and I felt like she never left me.

I work on the Children of Incarcerated Parents Youth Advisory Committee with the Family Preservation Project. I want to make sure that my voice and experience helps others who have a parent who is incarcerated. I want those of us who have been directly impacted by parental incarceration to be at the center of conversations about us. I helped make Oregon the first state to create a Bill of Rights for Children of Incarcerated Parents in statute in 2017. I am committed to seeing that our rights become realities, and that other children, just like me, will feel less guilt and shame, and more supported because we normalize talking about parental incarceration.

**It is critical that we as a community and as a state not only recognize the needs, but that we also PRIORITIZE the rights of children of incarcerated parents. I know it's possible and that FPP works. I am living proof.** Funding FPP ensures fewer children are placed in foster care, incarcerated moms are less likely to go back to prison, and children of participants are exhibiting successful outcomes academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally.

Thank you for your leadership and for your commitment to Oregon. Please support HB 2731 so that these critical supports and services do not go away.

Sincerely,

Malique Sweet  
Corvallis, OR