

TO: Ways & Means Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez, and Members of the Committee
DATE: May 3, 2023
RE: SUPPORT THE FAMILY PRESERVATION PROJECT/HB 2731

Dear Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez and members of the Committee,

Please fund the Family Preservation Project/HB 2731.

I support FPP, because without this program my family would not be where it is today. Our journey of healing began when I was in Coffee Creek from 2016-2019 because of FPP. It was the only program that empowered me to rise above and follow my dreams, to heal from harm I endured and to repair the harm I caused. I was given an opportunity to continue to mother my children in prison, my kids needed to know they were still loved and that my poor decisions did not impact my love for them or who they were. I was provided phone calls at no cost to my family or myself. I was able to communicate with my community and build a village of support for my kids and to secure scholarships for them to be in activities and sports. I was able to participate in teacher conferences and doctor appointments. Not only did this program do so much for me in prison, but it also continued to support me and my family as we transitioned back together in the community.

I now work for this program as a mentor and get to walk alongside moms releasing as they navigate all the same things I had to. I get to help create a path for them with fewer barriers and they get to witness what it looks like to come out the other side and be okay. Without this program, there would be nothing to serve the large population of mothers at Coffee Creek and their kids. The support the kids and their families receive from this program is irreplaceable. It's not just for the moms inside it is a holistic approach of healing and repairing harm.

What does funding FPP do?

Funding FPP helps to actualize the Bill of Rights for Children of Incarcerated Parents. It is critical that we as a community and as a state recognize the needs and prioritize the rights of children of incarcerated parents from the time of their parent's arrest through incarceration. We must do better.

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,

Vanessa Sherrod
Salem, OR