



**Testimony of Kimberly McCullough, Legislative Director  
In Support of SB 242  
Senate Committee on Human Services  
April 3, 2017**

Chair Gelser and Members of the Committee:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon<sup>1</sup> supports SB 242, which would appropriate money from the General Fund to continue funding the Family Preservation Project (FPP) through the YWCA. As a nonpartisan organization dedicated to preservation and enhancement of civil liberties and civil rights, the ACLU of Oregon supports programs that promote healthy relationships between children and their incarcerated parents.

Incarceration negatively impacts families. Children with incarcerated parents experience a range of emotional, behavioral, and developmental challenges that can impact their educational success and long-term mental and physical health. Research shows that children with incarcerated mothers are 2.5 times more likely to become incarcerated in their lifetime than if their father is incarcerated.<sup>2</sup>

SB 242 helps to reduce the negative impacts of incarceration on children by investing in their academic, social, behavioral, and emotional health. The FPP provides programs that include daycare and afterschool care, therapeutic visitations, and peer mentoring and support. This policy works, as FPP children are performing well on academic indicators like school attendance and reading at grade level.

Keeping families connected also has a positive impact on incarcerated mothers and improves public safety by reducing recidivism. Being separated from children is a traumatic experience for mothers behind bars. Nationally, 84% of incarcerated mothers had at least one child living with them before incarceration.<sup>3</sup> Research has shown that FPP mothers are more likely to be parenting post-incarceration and have significantly reduced recidivism rates.

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<sup>1</sup> The American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon (ACLU of Oregon) is a nonprofit organization with more than 37,000 members in the State of Oregon.

<sup>2</sup> Danielle H. Dallaire, "Incarcerated Mothers and Fathers: A Comparison of Risks for Children and Families." *Family Relations*, vol. 56, no. 5, 2007, pp. 440–453.

<sup>3</sup> Glaze, L. and Maruschak, L., Parents in Prison and Their Minor Children, Bureau of Justice Statistics Washington, D.C. 2011.

SB 242 will ensure that FPP can continue to promote these trends and reduce recidivism by strengthening the bonds between mothers and their children during incarceration. The FPP promotes individual and system level change to reduce the collateral consequences of parental incarceration on children, families, and the community. By interrupting the cycle of intergenerational incarceration, supporting successful re-entry to decrease recidivism, and reducing the trauma experienced by incarcerated parents and their children, the FPP creates safer communities for all of us.

For each of these reasons, the ACLU of Oregon urges you to support SB 242.