Kate Brown
Governor

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Testimony in Support of SB 939
April 7, 2015, Hearing Room B, 3 pm
Senate Human Services and Early Childhood

OR Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs
Stephen Ying, Chair
Mari Watanabe, Vice Chair
Legislative Liaisons:
Sen. Michael Dembrow
Rep. Gene Whisnant

OR Commission on Black Affairs
James I. Manning Jr., Chair
James Morris, Vice Chair
Legislative Liaisons:
Sen. Rod Monroe
Rep. Lew Frederick

OR Commission on Hispanic Affairs
Alberto Moreno, Chair
John Haroldson, Vice Chair
Legislative Liaisons:
Sen. Chip Shields
Rep. Jessica Vega Pederson

OR Commission for Women
Stephanie Vardavas, Chair
Jeanne Burch, Vice Chair
Legislative Liaisons:
Sen. Laurie Monnes Anderson
Rep. Betty Komp

Staff
Lucy Baker, Administrator
Nancy Kramer, Executive Assistant

Chair Gelser, Vice-chair Olsen, and committee members:

The Oregon Advocacy Commissions strongly support SB 939 which establishes supportive services, training, and evaluation for incarcerated parents and their children. The Oregon Commissions on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs, Black Affairs, Hispanic Affairs and for Commission for Women believe that strong families are the backbone of any society and support policies that actively promote stable families throughout Oregon.

SB 939 is such a bill. While teaching parenting skills to parents who may never have had such an opportunity in their lives before incarceration, it reaches into our communities and families directly as they make connection with their children in supportive, caring ways. The model from Coffee Creek Correctional Facility that is the foundation of this legislation has also shown that the devastating effect incarceration can have on individuals personally and with their families is greatly reduced as they rejoin their children with better tools and emotional resilience.

SB 939 is also important to the Advocacy Commissions because it puts incarcerated parents and their children in the tracking information and program support that the Department of Corrections provides. This is new for them and we consider this a key step as members of communities of color and women are historically more vulnerable to the effects of poverty and, for prisoners of color whether men or women, being overrepresented in prison populations. A modest investment there to assure that parents in prison are appreciated for that role within their families and are offered the tools they need will improve the overall strength of family ties across the state as prisoners rejoin society.

The Oregon Advocacy Commissions join with our community partners and urges an Aye vote on SB 939.

Sincerely,

Stephen Ying, Chair, OCAPIA

James I. Manning Jr., Chair, OCBA

Alberto Moreno, Chair, OCHA

Stephanie Vardavas, Chair, OCFW