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Proponent Written-Only Testimony on SB 489

Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare

Chair Gossage and members of the Committee-

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the Nursery Program for Incarcerated Moms (SB 489). Our organization, Ministry to Incarcerated Families, has been involved at TCF for over 30 years. I've been involved with them for 13 years. I'm currently the coordinator for the retreats that occur for mothers and their children. These retreats happen several times a year, inside and outside of the facility. They are an opportunity for the mothers to apply what they have learned in the parenting classes that are offered, and to have one-on-one time with their children, without being under the scrutiny of others. While the retreats are special, they hardly offer the time necessary to really bond with each other. Once the children depart, they are back in the care of family or foster care, and the mothers have to wait until the next retreat (often several months due to the high demand to participate), to use the parenting skills they worked so hard to understand and accomplish. If the skills were able to be put into action daily, I can only imagine the bond that could be built between a mother and child! As bonds are strengthened, years of bad behavior and choices can be reduced or even eliminated. I help mentor the parenting classes that I referenced, and I've seen how women can grow in knowledge and understanding of what an active and involved parent can look like, even without having a child present to use the skills that they are learning. If the women are given a chance to be with their child from the beginning of their young lives, bad cycles can be broken and the family unit can be built strong enough to resist going back to a life of drug use and criminal behavior. This would, of course, reduce recidivism, which should be the end goal of anyone that is incarcerated.

I'm so excited at what the Nursery Program for Moms, SB 489, could mean for incarcerated mothers, their children and the community as a whole. My hope is that you will see the vision as well, and pass the bill.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to share this testimony with you. Should you have any questions, please contact me at [mkprice@sunflower.com](mailto:mkprice@sunflower.com) or 785-331-6143.

Respectfully,

Kirsten Price