



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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Senate supports family related sentencing alternatives

SB 895 modifies eligibility for Family Sentencing Alternative Pilot Program

SALEM – Locking up individuals who have children can have detrimental impacts on future generations, and the Oregon Senate today voted to provide an alternative for some parents who have been convicted of a crime to be able to serve a sentence without uprooting them from their families.

Senate Bill 895 – which passed the Senate on a 27-0 vote – modifies the eligibility for the Family Sentencing Alternative Pilot Program to include defendants who are pregnant or have physical custody of a child when the sentencing occurs. It also allows offenders with current or past convictions of certain crimes to be considered for the program, unless their conviction carries a mandatory minimum sentence.

“Ripping a parent away from a child to incarcerate them has huge long-term impacts on the child, leading to a greater risk for that child later in life, possibly even leading to future generations of criminal behavior,” said Sen. James Manning (D-Eugene), who carried the bill. “This bill expands the number of parents who can participate in this program, serving out their sentences and improving their own situations while allowing their children to maintain some semblance of normalcy in their lives. It’s the compassionate thing to do, and it should help get more defendants on the right track, and keep their kids on a healthy path.”

The bill directs the Oregon Department of Corrections to establish a process for selecting counties to participate in the pilot program.

The Legislature created the Family Sentencing Alternative Pilot Program in 2015, and made it available to defendants who had physical custody of a child at the time the offense was

committed. Those defendants then were sentenced to probation rather than prison sentences. The program imposes special probation conditions that must be met, such as parenting skills classes, life skills classes and drug, alcohol or mental health treatment.

Senate Bill 895 now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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