

United Women in Faith
(formerly known as United Methodist Women)
Ministry to Incarcerated Families

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Chairperson, Ministry to Incarcerated Families, United Women in Faith (formerly United Methodist Women)
Proponent Verbal Testimony on HB 2811
House Committee on Appropriations

Chair Waymaster and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the Nursery Program for Incarcerated Moms (HB 2811)

I have been involved with the Ministry to Incarcerated Families, a mission of United Women in Faith for almost 25 years. I have been an active volunteer at the Topeka Correctional Facility (TCF) as a part of this ministry. The Ministry to Incarcerated Families has focused on the women at TCF and their children/families from the beginning. We began by facilitating parenting classes and providing resources for retreats where the moms/grandmas and their children can spend quality time together both at TCF and at a location outside TCF for minimum custody residents. We helped create the Women's Activities Learning Center (WALC) area at TCF which focuses on programming for moms and children. Our hope is that if we can create strong bonds between moms and their children that we can help change the lives of both mom and child. The moms learn parenting skills while incarcerated but can't put those lessons to use when someone else has custody of their child.

I have seen firsthand an onsite facility for moms and children and I believe with such a facility at TCF we can help families strengthen their bond, moms to carry out the lessons they learn and help to improve the mental health of both mom and child. In the states that currently have a similar program (9 states with 1 to come in 2025) there is a significant drop in recidivism. The moms have a purpose when they are released and a connection to their child. They are less likely to return to drug use.

We have seen positive results between moms and their children with the current programming at TCF. We can only imagine how much more could be accomplished to strengthen these families if we could have them together from birth until the moms are released.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this testimony with you today. Feel free to contact me with any questions at teresatuch@gmail.com.

Sincerely,
Teresa Tuhscherer
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