

SB 5291: Expanding Parenting Sentencing Alternatives

WDA and WACDL strongly support this bill, which would expand the Parenting Sentencing Alternative programs. Reunifying parents with support through this sentencing alternative improves the quality of child-parent reunification and improves public safety. It is counterproductive to leave parents in prison or to send parents to prison who would otherwise be good candidates to serve their final 12 months of imprisonment on electronic home monitoring while completing a successful parenting program. These successful programs make communities safer, save the state money in incarceration costs, and reduce recidivism. Additional positive benefits could be achieved by expanding the bill further to allow: (1) parents to apply to the sentencing courts without regard for their criminal history; and (2) parents to apply to DOC for this parenting program without regard to their current offense (other than sex offenses) or their risk assessment level.

- **The Parenting Sentencing Alternative is an extremely successful program, which saves the state money both by reducing incarceration costs and recidivism.**
- **A person with a prior violent felony offense can be successful on the program regardless of their risk assessment level.** Since its creation in 2010, parents with prior violent criminal history have been accepted into and have successfully completed the prison-based alternative (CPA). Parents with prior violent offenses should be allowed to apply at sentencing for the court-based alternative (PSA).
- **Eliminate the restriction on applicants for the prison- based alternative (CPA) based on their current offense (other than sex offenses) or risk assessment level.** Many people serving sentences for violent crimes are actively parenting from prison. Parents assessed at high risk of re-offense have been successfully supervised on the CPA. The prison-based alternative (CPA) has been successful with assuring public safety and supporting reunification when the parent has prior violent prior convictions on their record without regard for their risk to re-offend. Parents who were previously convicted of violent offenses have participated successfully in this alternative since its creation without regard for their risk to re-offend. It makes little sense to exclude these parents in prison, who might otherwise be good candidates for this successful parenting program, from applying for the CPA.

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