



Chair Tomei and members of the committee. My name is Susan Stark Haydon and I live in the Sellwood area of Rep. Tomei's district.

I am testifying in support of HB 2392 on behalf of the Tigard-Tualatin School District. Our district is lucky enough to be served by the Washington County Commission on Children and Families. Through the Commission's cobbling together of a variety of funds, our at-risk students have become less at-risk because of programs that have kept them connected with school and out of the juvenile justice system.

Those programs include our middle school after school activities program and the Tigard-Tualatin Family Resource Center—programs whose funding is now allocated to the Youth Development Council and the Early Childhood Learning Council—and programs which I believe meet the stated goals of these two new councils.

For nearly 20 years, a small grant of about \$13,000 per school per year (\$36,000 total) has provided money to "scholarship in" at-risk students to our middle school after school activity program. This may seem like a small amount for our district to absorb----but it's significant when you consider that we are looking at another year of significant budget reductions that could range from \$4 to 9M depending upon the funding level approved by the legislature.

I want to tell you why continued funding for these programs is so important. Unsupervised time afterschool is an issue for many students who go home to empty houses and to neighborhoods where finding trouble and gangs is much easier than finding homework help. Our middle school activity program seeks out these students and gets them signed up for a variety of activities that connect them with teachers and with fellow students who can serve as positive role models.

We are on track to have 1000 students participate in this year's after school activities program at Hazelbrook Middle School in Tualatin. Activities offered this fall included Robotics, basketball, Zumba, homework club, ceramics, soccer, Random Acts of Kindness, and engineering. Hazelbrook's winter wrestling program involves 50 students—many of whom are at-risk and 40% of whom are Latino. Those students are Hazelbrook's wrestling team and their school pride is evident when they represent Hazelbrook in area competitions. Money for middle school activities is limited so the two teachers who lead this program have used their own funds to pay the tournament fees and to buy singlets for the students to wear. The students know their teachers care and know they are learning something valuable as a result of their participation. Twenty members of this once ragtag group of miscellaneous at risk students are now part of Tualatin High's wrestling team—a team that just two weeks ago beat perennial wrestling champion Newberg.

One last story: We had another student who was always getting into fights so of course he was targeted for the after school program. Teachers noticed he was a fast runner---even though he didn't own any running shoes. The teacher who coordinated the track program used his own money to buy the student some running shoes and soon that student started winning races—even against kids whose parents paid for them to participate in the local youth track club. One day, he and another student were having an issue and the other student started to fight him. The potential altercation occurred on the same day as a track meet and our little runner knew he couldn't participate if he got into trouble—so he became a pacifist—held the other student back and told him he wouldn't fight.

We have many similar stories. Our at-risk students who participate in after school activities have improved grades, better attendance and fewer discipline referrals as a result of their participation. We know this because the Commission requires us to measure and report outcomes.

The other program I will mention briefly and then give you information prepared by its director, Catherine West, is our Tigard-Tualatin Family Resource Center. This is another 20-year program cobbled together with funding from the Commission on Children and Families. It has kept students in school and out of trouble by connecting them with basic needs including the Dental Van, eyeglasses and the Oregon Health Plan. It has also provided support for their families including parenting and English language classes and community sponsors for holiday gifts and food.



## **Tigard-Tualatin Family Resource Center A Vital Asset to the Tigard-Tualatin School District**

Since opening its doors to local families in need in 1993, the Tigard-Tualatin Family Resource Center (TTFRC) has become an integral part of the Tigard-Tualatin School District. Center staff works closely with TTSD staff on a daily basis to assist in connecting families in need with community resources. School counselors regularly refer families to the resource center for help in getting health insurance, counseling, eyeglasses, furniture, clothing, food, scholarships for extracurricular activities and many other resources. The center provides over 200 consultations to school staff each month and resource connection to an estimated 2,000 families each year.

TTFRC's efforts to assist families in accessing needed community resources correlates directly with TTSD's mission to educate every child. When children live in homes where basic needs are met, they are more successful in school. Regan Gray, policy director for Children First for Oregon, said, "We know that children that live in poverty usually suffer from [the] circumstances that brings. They'll have lower educational attainment, school achievement, behavioral and emotional well-being and physical health issues."<sup>1</sup>

Local families in need and school staff working to educate their children face the challenge of constantly changing community resources and eligibility requirements. If a child needs medical care, for example, there are programs that may be available to help, but navigating these systems and applying for assistance can be confusing and time-consuming. To facilitate resource connection for local families and school staff, TTFRC publishes a yearly resource guide tailored to families in need that live in Tigard and Tualatin. The updated and area-specific resource guide saves families, school staff and other providers a considerable amount of time. If a family comes to the school in need of food, medical care or counseling, for example, a staff person need only copy the appropriate page from the resource guide and give it to the family with the confidence that the information is up-to-date and accurate. While some agencies simply refer families to services, resource center staff takes the extra step of personally connecting families with resources when they have challenges to doing so independently. In addition, all center staff is bilingual in Spanish and often interprets for families with service providers.

Other center services include coordination of mobile dental clinics, holiday sponsorship and volunteer-led English classes. In order to meet the dental needs of TTSD children without insurance, TTFRC coordinates mobile dental clinics that go to elementary schools. The focus of the dental care is on students with pain, infection and other urgent care needs. Last school year, the center helped to coordinate 22 mobile dental clinics that provided 225 appointments to TTSD students. Since academic year 2000-2001, TTFRC has helped to coordinate almost 200 clinics that have provided over 2,000 appointments to students in need. TTFRC is also a central part of TTSD's holiday sponsorship coordination each year. This year, over 600 families including 1,800 children in need were connected with toys and food over winter break. Families who depend on free and reduced school lunches may find winter break a particularly challenging time, which makes the

donated food that much more essential. Additionally, volunteer-led English classes for adults take place at TTFRC on a regular basis. The majority of the participants are school parents wanting to improve their English so that they can feel more connected to the community, help their children with homework and communicate better with school staff.

The Washington County Commission on Children & Families funds TTFRC but the center also leverages a great deal of community support. The City of Tualatin, the City of Tigard, Lamb Research and other businesses and community groups have been regular contributors to the resource center. This past year, the center received an estimated \$50,000 in funds and in-kind donations that were funneled to local families in need in the form of hygiene products, food vouchers, transportation assistance, mobile dental clinics, holiday sponsorship, scholarships for extracurricular activities and other needed resources. In addition, interns from such programs as AmeriCorps and PCC Steps to Success have helped to maximize TTFRC's community impact without increasing costs.

Over the past 20 years, TTFRC has hosted a wide range of out-stationed staff members working to help Tigard and Tualatin families. There are currently two Healthy Kids Outreach & Enrollment Workers that are bilingual in Spanish located at TTFRC who are helping to get children enrolled in state health insurance. Last school year, the workers assisted 278 families, including 517 children, in getting enrolled in the Oregon Health Plan so that they could receive coverage for on-going, preventative and urgent medical, dental, vision and mental health care.

Evaluations completed by school staff, clients, and community partners consistently reflect exceptionally high levels of satisfaction with TTFRC and appreciation of services. A middle school counselor, for example, comments that what he values most about the center is "the up-to-date resource information" and "I know I can refer families to one place that can assist them with many needs." A school principal comments that she appreciates "having quick and courteous services to families that I can count on especially when I have several things come up at once here." Some client comments include: "I like it here. It helps my family when we are in need!" "The Family Resource Center is a vital part of the community." "I appreciate all the kindness and help I have received... I always feel well informed and cared about. Coming out of domestic violence with numerous cognitive and medical problems, this has always been my greatest resource."

The services provided by TTFRC are essential to helping TTSD families meet their basic needs so that their children can come to school ready to learn. If the resource center were to close its doors, there would be a major gap in services that would directly impact local families in need and would be felt largely by the school staff working to educate their children.

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<sup>i</sup> Children First of Oregon, Speaking Up for Kids Since 1991, [www.cffo.org](http://www.cffo.org)