



*Hundreds of Police Chiefs, Sheriffs,
Prosecutors, other Law Enforcement
Leaders, and Violence Survivors
Preventing Crime and Violence*

Testimony On HB 2013 To The
Oregon Ways & Means Education Sub Committee
Support of HB 2013 A-Engrossed with Amendments to Sections 5 & 6 for Healthy Start Oregon
May 15, 2013
Capitol Building, Salem, OR

Participant for the record:

Martha Brooks
State Director - Fight Crime: Invest In Kids OR
State Healthy Start Oregon Advisory Chair
17675 SW Farmington Road, PMB 336, Beaverton, OR 97007

Martha Brooks, State Director

Thank you Co-Chairs Monroe and Komp and members of the committee for this opportunity. My name is Martha Brooks and I am here today in two capacities. First as the State Director of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS and the second as the chair of the State Healthy Start~Healthy Families Advisory Committee.

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS *OREGON* is a bi-partisan organization of over 160 police chiefs, sheriffs, district attorneys, and victims of violence dedicated to preventing crime by investing in proven programs that get kids started on the right track. FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS *OREGON* is part of the national organization of over 5,000 law enforcement members.

The members of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS believe criminals must be put behind bars, but locking them up is not the entire solution to crime. A key component to crime reduction is early prevention such as Oregon's statewide Healthy Start ~Healthy Families Oregon volunteer home visiting program. Healthy Start is Oregon's best child abuse and neglect prevention program which translates in to fewer children coming in to foster care, fewer children ending up in crime, and more families succeeding. Healthy Start~Healthy Families also translate in to kids being ready to start school as one of the benchmarks of the program is preparing young children to learn. The program serves over 3,000 families in 35 counties across the state and as of December 2012, the statewide program – all counties and the state program - were again re-accredited by Healthy Families America. No small feat for a statewide program.

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS *OREGON* has long supported Healthy Start~Healthy Families Oregon and the whole Oregon home visiting system. That is why we urge you to support HB 2013 and the Early Learning Council legislation. Fight Crime: Invest in Kids and the State Healthy Start Advisory Committee support the key amendments that have been engrossed in HB 2013 that affect Healthy Start in sections 5 & 6 of the bill. These amendments go to the fidelity of the model, follow the national

Healthy Families America model, and follow the language within Oregon's Healthy Start~Healthy Families Policies and Procedures manual.

There are still a few technical amendments that we would request. They are attached at the end of this testimony with an explanation and rationale for the changes. All are housekeeping, would provide clarity in the language for the program, take into account current practices, as well as current early learning and the home visiting systems work in Oregon. These last amendments to the Healthy Start sections would bring the legislation in line with current practices and language.

In light of the changes not only to Healthy Start~Healthy Families Oregon and the entire early childhood system, FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS would like to remind you of a few important reasons for the legislature's continued support of Healthy Start~Healthy Families as well as home visiting.

Consider that in 2011, 15 Oregon children died from abuse and neglect and 10 of these children were under 5 and only 1 had a child welfare case open at the time and only 1 was in the Department's custody at the time of their death. Of the 11,599 unduplicated children abused and neglected, infants - 1,420 - make up the largest single age group of victims. Of the 15 children who lost their life in 2011, all had at least one parent as the perpetrator.

Also consider that nearly 94 percent of child abuse and neglect occurs from a familial contact of which over 82 percent of that total is by the mother and/or father. Logic and research both indicate that working with the parents as early as possible that have the risk factors that show up in child abuse and neglect would have positive effects. Healthy Start~Healthy Families Oregon works with these families by screening for drug and alcohol abuse, depression and mental health issues, unemployment and financial issues, relationship issues, isolation and more. The results continue to show year after year that Healthy Start~Healthy Families has a great track record at reducing abuse and neglect. The most recent maltreatment report the state has on the program from 2009 shows high-risk families served by Healthy Start are less than half as likely to be involved in abuse and neglect as similar families not in the program.

For law enforcement the connection is elementary. We're creating new criminals and new victims every single day by allowing abuse and neglect to continue. Fewer child abuse and neglect cases, fewer crimes. Just think of the lives saved and the taxpayer dollars we could reinvest in our communities.

I often hear law enforcement leaders talk about arresting adults they first encountered as abuse and neglect victims as children for abusing and neglecting their own kids. I'm always saddened when I hear of these generational cases. One study showed that poor mothers who had been abused or neglected as a child were 13 times more likely to abuse their children than mothers who were not abused.

I am even more saddened to have my members tell me about the deaths they have to investigate. And believe me I NEVER want to hear from any of them again, that they had to stand over an autopsy table or walk in to a home only to be left with carrying a young body out of the home. Our hearts ached in December when 20-year old Adam Lanza walked in to Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown Connecticut and killed 12 children. Yet, we sit and hardly blink an eye when 15 of OUR children die from abuse and neglect. The only difference is this did not happen on one day and all at once. This is just as big a tragedy and it goes on year after year after year. Enough is enough. We MUST do

something to stop this cycle and home visiting is one of those programs that does work to prevent this carnage. Healthy Start~Healthy Families Oregon is the starting point.

Systems are interrelated and connected. To dismiss one severs the link in the chain. Unfortunately for many that chain has a great chance of being mended as a chain link fence with razor wire at the top. To wait until the phone call is made to DHS and a case is opened, frankly, is too late. We should not wait for abuse and neglect to happen before taking actions. Experts are more and more in agreement that we can intervene earlier and that home visitation is an answer.

Difficult decisions will be made over the next few months, but Oregon needs to make a strong commitment to provide services to its at-risk parents and kids. We cannot expect to decrease cases of child abuse and neglect or reduce the number of children in foster care without at least maintaining the investments that strengthen and preserve healthy, happy families with good parents. It is hard to imagine any other investments we can make as a state that would so substantially reduce child abuse and neglect and also reduce budgetary demands in years to come. It will also begin to save innocent lives almost immediately. Something Fight Crime: Invest in Kids members would welcome.

As members of the Ways & Means Education Sub Committee, it will now be up to you to work with the Healthy Start~Healthy Families program and home visiting. It is for you to look at this program and see the benefits. For law enforcement, there is not question as to the benefits. This program is crime prevention and is just as important to them as their own budgets. For you, it is a program that saves money, saves lives and yes, does have an educational benefit. The program reduces the number of children coming in to school with emotional and social issues and it is a program that prepares young children for Pre-K. It also prepares parents to be the best they can at helping to nurture their children.

That is why **the members of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS OREGON ask you to support and pass HB 2013 so that kids get the right start in life.** And why the members of the State Healthy Start~Healthy Families Oregon Advisory Committee ask you to support Sections 5 & 6 of the bill as engrossed.

Thank you.

Suggested Revisions to HB2013 A Engrossed

These suggested revisions would provide clarity in language, take into account current practice, as well as current early learning and home visiting systems work in Oregon. Since the original legislation was drafted 23 years ago, systems and practices have evolved. The changes below would bring the legislation in line with current practices and language.

Rationale:

- Update to reflect current home visiting partners. At the time of the original legislation (1993) Public Health was the only other home visiting provider considered for coordination efforts.
- Update to reflect current practice of services to at least age three (not six) and remove reference of primary health services, as this program is not a medical model.
- Incorporate Early Learning System language and current practice of risk screening (not assessment) for eligibility.
- Since the statute is being revised, every effort should be made to bring the statute and language in line with actual practice and current systems.

Suggestion Revisions – Sections 5 & 6:

- ❖ Page 6, Line 23&27 & Page 8, Line 7&11 - ...comprehensive **risk** screening ~~and risk assessment~~
- ❖ Page 6, Line 24&25 & Page 8, Line 8&9 - ...and their families in coordination with **voluntary** statewide **early learning system** screening and **referral** ~~risk assessment~~...
- ❖ Page 6, Line 34 & Page 8, Line 18 - ...risk **screen** ~~assessment~~
- ❖ Page 6, Line 38 & Page 8, Line 22 – Delete ~~and primary health care services~~
- ❖ Page 6, Line 45 & Page 8, Line 29 - Delete Lines 45&29
- ❖ Page 7, Line 11&12 & Page 8, Line 39&40 – Replace ~~local health...perinatal services in counties,~~ with **in coordination with statewide home visiting partners.**
- ❖ Page 7, Line 21 & Page 9, Line 3 – Replace ~~health departments~~ with **home visiting partners**
- ❖ Page 7, Line 36 & Page 9, Line 17 – Delete ~~including a family services coordinator.....available to consult~~