

Catholic Community Services

A Forever Home for Everyone

March 11, 2013

Representative Carolyn Tomei, Chair
House Human Services and Housing Committee

RE: House Bill 2013

Chair Tomei and Members of the House Human Services and Housing Committee,

On behalf of Catholic Community Services in the Willamette Valley, I am pleased to submit this letter in support of the Healthy Start~Healthy Families provisions of House Bill 2013. The bill makes a simple, but important, change that will increase access to this successful program for families who need it most.

Healthy Start~Healthy Families is an early childhood program that provides psycho-social supports, care coordination, child development education, and parent training services using a home visiting service delivery model. This effective program is designed to prevent child maltreatment, promote child wellbeing and help parents to prepare their children for kindergarten.

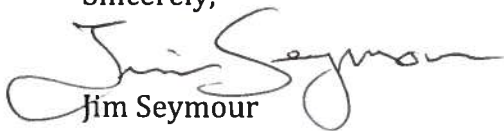
Under current law, the Healthy Start~Healthy Families services are limited to families experiencing their "first birth" and is not available to families who are expecting a subsequent child. Often, these are families who need these services the most.

For example, Beth is a 23 year-old woman who is pregnant with her second child. She had a drug problem in the past, but has been clean and sober for the last two years. When her first child was two years old, she lost her to foster care because of neglect related to drug abuse. Beth is not eligible for Healthy Start~Healthy Families services because this is her second child. Healthy Start~Healthy Families' availability should open to any high risk family, those parents who need the parenting support most, not just those having their first child.

House Bill 2013 corrects this problem by removing the first-birth restriction to access Healthy Start~Healthy Families early childhood services. This bill recognizes that family and parenting dynamics change over time. With these changes the need for support also changes with subsequent births. The services provided by Healthy Start can have an important role beyond first births in supporting parents at risk and in reducing costs associated with poor parenting that occur later in the continuum.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our support for the Healthy Start~Healthy Families provisions in HB 2013.

Sincerely,


Jim Seymour
Executive Director

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Lead Agency
FosteringHope Initiative
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