



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

Testimony  
Oregon State Joint Ways & Means Education Sub-Committee  
*Early Learning Division Budget 2015-2017*  
March 10, 2015  
Capitol Building, Salem, OR

**Participant for the record:**

**State Director Martha Brooks, Fight Crime: Invest In Kids  
17675 SW Farmington Road, PMB 336, Beaverton, OR 97007**

**Martha Brooks, State Director**

Co-Chairs Komp and Monroe, and members of the Ways and Means Education Sub-Committee, my name is Martha Brooks and I am the State Director of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids. Fight Crime: Invest in Kids is a bi-partisan organization of over almost 5,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, attorney generals and survivors of violence with over 160 members in Oregon. The members of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids believe criminals must be put behind bars, but they are also dedicated to preventing crime by investing in proven programs that get kids started on the right track in life.

**I am here today on behalf of the members of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids to ask you to increase funding to Healthy Families Oregon, Early Intervention & Early Childhood Special Education, and the Kindergarten Partnership and Innovation Fund. We ask you invest in quality preschool for children up to 200% of the federal poverty level and continue to invest and support the important work of the Early Learning HUBs.**

All of these programs are supported by Fight Crime: Invest in Kids. They are backed by research-based evidence that show that these programs have numerous crime prevention outcomes and benefit children and families. These programs also show a very strong economic return on investment.

**Healthy Families Oregon:**

Healthy Families Oregon (HFO) is the states best child abuse and neglect prevention program which translates into fewer kids coming to foster care, fewer kids in crime, and more families succeeding. Voluntary home visiting such as HFO can reduce child abuse and neglect by up to 50%.

Consider in 2013, 10 Oregon kids died from abuse and neglect. 7 were under age 5. These are hard numbers for us to listen to, but consider our law enforcement and how hard it is for them with each fatality. They receive the calls, preform the investigations and yes, stand over the autopsy tables and look at the small bodies. These are not just statistics to them. And the sad reality is that these numbers do not go down. Of the 10,630 kids abused and neglected, infants make up the largest group (1,360 – 12.8%). Most of the abusers are parents. To wait until the phone call is made to DHS or law enforcement and a case is opened is not the correct course.

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Logic and research both indicate working with the parents that have the risk factors that show up in abuse and neglect cases as early as possible would result in the greatest positive effects. HFO works with these families by screening for drug and alcohol abuse, depression and mental health issues, unemployment and relationship issues and more.

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy found that home visiting programs produced savings in improved children's health, reduced abuse and neglect, increased readiness for school and reduce future crime substantially. Added up, the savings is an average net (after subtracting costs) of \$17,000 per family served.

Today our state investment to HFO is almost half what it was 12 years ago. In 2013 the legislature passed changes that allowed subsequent births to be served and provided no new funding. Each year, approximately 45,000 children are born and we only serve less than 15% of those needing services.

### **High Quality Early Childhood Education and Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education:**

High quality early education has enormous benefits. An independent analysis of over 20 preschool programs demonstrated that quality preschool returns an average "savings" of \$15,000 for every child served by cutting crime and the costs of incarceration, and reducing special education costs.

Quality preschool also shows that children enrolled versus those not enrolled are more likely to graduate from high school. In a study of the Boston pre-K program, both children eligible for free and reduced price meals and middle class children improved on language, literacy and math outcomes, emotional development, and some executive functioning (self-control) outcomes.

If we are to reach our state goal of 100% graduation, we need to start early. Today, we only serve 50% of eligible Head Start children. 75% percent of 3 and 4 year olds who are low-income do not have access to high quality preschool.

To intervene early in a child's life when problems arise is the preference of every law enforcement leader. Dealing with social and emotional problems sooner rather than later, will get kids started on the right path in life, will increase academic achievement, reduce grade retention, increase family stability and increase the number of our children completing school – on time and ready to succeed.

**Fight Crime: Invest in Kids supports a \$10 million increase in Healthy Families Oregon, \$30 million in new preschool investments, \$5 million increase for the Kindergarten and Innovation Fund, a \$15 million increase for Early Intervention and Childhood services and a continued investment and commitment to building a strong and supportive Early Learning HUB network.**

All of these programs go hand-in-hand. They all get kids ready for school. Without adequate investments, we will pay the price – in taxes for criminal justice, costs to business, costs to victims and costs to our country.

Thank you,  
Martha Brooks

