



March 8, 2017

Chair Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, Chair Dan Rayfield
Members of the Joint Ways & Means Sub-Committee on Human Services
Salem, OR

Chair Steiner Hayward, Chair Rayfield and members of the Committee:

As the state director of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS AND READY NATION, both national non-partisan organizations of over 6,500 members representing senior law enforcement and business leaders with over 200 members in Oregon, I am writing in **support of state investments in home visiting within HB 5026** that will protect our youngest children, provide the foundation for a successful career and help families provide healthy and nourishing environments.

The members of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS absolutely believe dangerous criminals must be put behind bars, but locking them up is not the entire solution to crime. In fact, it is the end solution. A key component to crime reduction is early prevention in the form of voluntary home visiting such as Baby's First, CaCoon, Maternal Case Management, and Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) - all volunteer parent coaching programs, all programs we have in Oregon and all serving specific at risk populations.

As ReadyNation members know, these programs improve school readiness, increase the chances at-risk children will graduate from school on time, answer many of the issues faced by poverty and definitely increase the health and well being of both mother and child. And the return on investment can be almost \$6 (\$5.70 – Pew Charitable Trusts-2011) for every public dollar spent. These savings are in reduced criminal justice, health and mental health costs; decreased welfare dependency and increased employment. One study found that infants who received NFP had 60 percent lower mortality rates than comparison groups.

All of us are horrified by cases of child abuse and neglect in newspaper headlines, but we seldom stop to think about the ultimate toll or what we can do to stop abuse and neglect. Nurse Family Partnership for example has the ability to reduce child abuse and neglect by as much as 50%. What that means is instead of a child and family hitting the doors of DHS, those families never see DHS. It is up-front and preventative instead of an after-the-fact intervention.

Voluntary home visiting programs provide critical support to vulnerable children and families by matching new and expectant parents with trained professionals to provide information and mentoring. Guidance and support by trusted professionals for parents during pregnancy and the first few years of a child's life can change the dynamics of a family for generations. As we know, parenting is the biggest challenge many people will face. For single and teen parents, this challenge is amplified. Voluntary parent coaching gives at-risk parents (often single parents) counseling, coaching, and support on a range of crucial parenting skills.

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During a home visit, a nurse or trained home visiting professional helps parents learn about early physical and emotional development. They provide families with the tools necessary to manage stress and anxiety, resources to ensure their child is safe, and techniques to effectively guide a toddler away from problem behaviors. Home visiting/parent coaching gives parents the ability to navigate through parenthood as constructive supportive parents instead of scared and ill-equipped parents. Often times, the professional home visitor will recognize needs of the family and help them navigate to other needed resources such as EI/ECSE, ERDC, medical resources, mental health services and much more, all helping to make families in Oregon safe and stable.

If a family chooses to receive home visits from trained professionals then it can make a positive difference for children and families. The unfortunate piece of home visiting is that we have so little resources for the programs.

We are particularly concerned with and object to the recommended reduction and elimination of funding to Baby's First. While a small amount of the general fund- \$1.5M,per biennium – this investment allows for a \$12M draw down of Medicaid funds. With home visiting services, Baby's First is often the first and only touch that a family has with someone trained to identify critical needs of baby and family. If we never touch these families and touch them early, then we cannot offer the other crucial services so desperately needed by these families. It would be a shame to see this eliminated from the continuum of home visiting services.

We know that statewide Oregon only provides resources to service approximately 20% of those families eligible. Many who want the service cannot access home visiting because of a lack of resources and funding. In Oregon, 40% of our families have two or more ACES indicators and yet we can only provide the essential services for far fewer. Programs have to pick and choose between who gets services and who does not and they go with the highest at need, leaving many to fend for themselves. Many of these families eventually end up costing us more through interaction with DHS and/or the criminal justice system and more. With 80% of brain development happening between birth and age 3, - 700 new neural connections every second - it is these early years that investments are critical and the most effective.

More needs to be done to expand home visiting programs. At a minimum, **present home visiting funding should be maintained, including the funding for Baby's First.** We urge you to support and fund these critical early childhood home-visiting resources.

Sincerely:

Martha Brooks

Martha Brooks, Oregon State and Western State Director,
Fight Crime: Invest in Kids and ReadyNation

C: Governor Kate Brown; Senate President Peter Courtney; House Speaker Tina Kotek

StrongNation.org/FightCrime



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