

March 15th 2017

To: Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education

Co-Chairs Monroe and Smith-Warner and members of the Committee, my name is Lisa Lee and I want to thank you for allowing me to testify today on behalf of Oregon's most vulnerable youth. I work as a School Site Coordinator under the PreventNet program, serving in a Clackamas County middle school funded by the Youth Development Council funds. My job is to support adolescent youth and their families, helping them to live, grow and succeed. I am here to share with you the good work that we are doing in Oregon schools and communities and to ask you **to recommend increasing or at least maintaining the Youth Development Council budget at the current service level funding**. I come here today because I feel as though we have a shared vision and commitment when it comes to Oregon's youth. My vision and commitment is supporting positive youth development, improving student outcomes such as academic success and school engagement, supporting families, and building strong communities where all youth feel like they belong.

I would like to give you a quick snap shot of the results of our work with youth at PreventNet sites. During the 2015-2016 school year, Youth Development Council funding allowed two agencies in Clackamas County within 10 PreventNet school sites to serve 569 students who were at risk of school failure and dropping out. Of those served, we helped 88% improve their grades, 78% improve their attendance, and 81% improve their behavior.

Today, I would like to share with you the story of "Jill", whose name I have changed for this testimony. I met Jill at the beginning of last school year- she was starting 6th grade. I came to understand how bright, funny, engaging and kind she was through the brief check-ins we would have. One afternoon she grabbed her lunch and approached me, asking if she could eat lunch down in my room. I thought that it would be another great opportunity to connect with her. These lunch talks started to become a pattern and through them I discovered the struggles she dealt with on a daily basis.

The hardships her family experienced over the years, transitioning between living with her mom out on the streets, to being picked up by dad and brought back to live with him all while trying to just get to school so she could have breakfast and lunch. She told me that her mom was addicted to drugs and she wasn't allowed to see her unless her dad supervised the visits. Her siblings who are older have gotten into drugs and become pregnant at an early age. She told me that her grandparents are alcoholics and they tell her what a burden she is to them. She has shared with me her goals, beliefs and life plans that she wants in her future. She hadn't shared that information with many adults outside of her family. She wants to do better than the examples she has been given at home.

Throughout the school year, I helped connect dad with a variety of resources and worked hard to connect Jill to counseling and after-school activities. She was in desperate need for glasses and with the help of a great resource, we were able to get her an eye exam and new glasses. Now she can better see what is being taught in the classroom and is now better able to do her homework. I was simply lucky enough to be the adult she came to count on for her needs to be met.

I understand that this is just one story, but there are many, many stories of adolescents like Jill all across the State of Oregon. The Youth Development Council provides funding to 36 counties and 9 tribes for successful youth programs that support the highest risk kids. And so, I want to emphasize how vital it is

that there not be any cuts to the Youth Development Council's budget. Oregon's most vulnerable students will be the ones to suffer from the lack of a relationship with someone who can provide that extra caring adult presence. As much as I play a role in these students' lives, all of you, co-chairs and committee, play an important role as well. Your support of increasing or maintaining current levels of funding for Youth Development Council programs helps us to support young people like Jill, as well as youth all across the great State of Oregon.

Thank you for your time.

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