



August 10, 2020

To: Co-Chair President Peter Courtney  
Co-Chair Speaker Tina Kotek  
Vice-Chair Senator Fred Girod  
Vice-Chair Representative Christine Drazan  
Members of the Joint Committee On The Second Special Session of 2020

From: Leslie Sutton, Policy Director, Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities  
Katie Rose, Chair, Oregon Developmental Disabilities Coalition

RE: SB 5723, Support funding for Family-to-Family Networks serving Oregon families

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Dear President Courtney, Speaker Kotek, Senator Girod, Representative Drazan, and members of the committee:

The DD Coalition is a group of approximately 40 organizations and individuals across Oregon that advocate for and promote quality services, equality, and community integration for Oregonians with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families. Our members represent advocacy groups (including self-advocacy organizations), family peer supports, DD residential providers, DD supported employment providers, and Support Services Brokerages.

The DD Coalition is an advocacy organization, first and foremost. We strongly support and advocate for the values outlined in ORS 427.007:

- ✓ to support people with IDD to exercise self-determination,
- ✓ living and working in the most integrated community settings,
- ✓ and providing services for families to raise their children at home.

We appreciate the difficult budget decisions before you, and we offer a few principles, based on our values, to help to inform you in your process. **These principles illustrate why we believe the Family-to-Family Networks have no place on the cuts list.** (currently line 112 of the SB 5723 Agency Reduction Detail)

Family to Family Networks help 12,250 Oregon families with children experiencing disability prevent crisis and raise their children at home. They help 2,600 more families than the formal DD services system, including many families who have barriers to accessing Medicaid, and identify as Black, Indigenous or a Person of Color. With the community capacity building work of the family networks and their 1,800 community partners, families have more opportunities for help outside state funded systems. This saves Oregon money by ensuring that families do not have to rely as heavily on state funded systems.



Family to Family Networks are effective and cheap. For \$665,000 per year, because of their involvement with the family network, 95% of the families believe their child will be healthy and safe and 4 out of 5 community partners believe that they can better engage families experiencing disability.

Our principles direct us to spare Family-to-Family Networks from their current brink of elimination.

**Maintain services designed to keep people out of more expensive services, settings, or crisis.**

Family networks and family support programs are specifically designed to meet the needs of families where they are to avoid crisis or more expensive services.

**Preserve services that maintain the IDD system values in Oregon law.**

Family networks are an important way that we fulfill the mandate in Oregon law to provide services to families so they can raise their children with disabilities at home.

**Avoid total elimination of programs or services.**

The current proposed funding reduction for Family Networks is severe, and will eliminate these programs entirely. Our Family Networks have served Oregon families for decades, often as a lifeline in times of crisis. The Family Networks are irreplaceable, and should not be eliminated.

**Make strategic use of General Fund-only programs to cover gaps in the system and allow us to respond nimbly to urgent needs.**

General fund programs often have more flexibility in design and services because they are not under the Medicaid rules. We use them to provide services to people who are not Medicaid eligible, or to provide necessary, cost-effective services that are not possible under Medicaid.

In addition to matching our values, we believe that preserving the Family Networks is supported by the Co-Chairs' rebalance principles of program and service preservation, and desire not to exacerbate barriers to underserved communities. These services are utilized by some of our most marginalized communities in Oregon, who rely upon these connections. Jobs will also certainly be lost in this reduction, at a time when Oregon's economy cannot bear it. And finally, we stand to sustain a long-term negative impact to the way families entering the system understand and utilize services. The efficiency and holistic view of Family Networks, that paid services are just one part of a whole support structure, is important to our community's judicious use of public funds.

SB 5723 proposes a 2/3 cut to this program leaving only \$200,000 for this year. This would make it impossible for the networks to continue changing the lives of Oregonians and their communities. Please help us continue to make a lasting, positive mark on the lives of families all over Oregon by preserving the Family-to-Family Networks with \$665,000 per year, now and in the future.