



April 13, 2021

**RE: SB 5529 – Restore \$1.3 million to Family to Family Networks**

Co-Chair Lieber, Co-Chair Nosse, and Members of the Committee,

The [Early Childhood Coalition](#) supports SB 5529 and the restoration of \$1.3 million for [Family to Family Networks](#). As the Coalition created our 2021 agenda, we started by hearing from culturally specific and direct service organizations working with families and providers who are Black and Indigenous, people of color, and who have historically been excluded from policy and budget decisions. Support for basic needs, including food, housing, and emotional support, were elevated as critical priorities for families.

Before the age of 5, a child's brain makes one million new neural connections every second, with early experiences shaping brain architecture. This stage of complex neural, social, and emotional development makes early childhood a critical window to support development. This means the early years are a critical window to provide rich, nurturing experiences for young children with disabilities.

Family to Family Networks bring families together to support each other and create more inclusive communities to ensure children with disabilities can access the experiences all children deserve. The Networks help families experiencing disability to envision a full life for their children and themselves, build meaningful relationships and experiences, and connect them with resources that can help. Families themselves affirm the value of these Networks:

*“Before this group, I was unable to leave my home and I had no [connection to my community]. I slowly began to get involved and through their trainings, was able to see the possibility in my son. The support I received allowed me to shift my thinking and I was filled with hope.”*

When communities who have been marginalized are at the center of decision-making, programs and services can mitigate disparities by race/ethnicity, income, geography, disability, language, immigrant and refugee status, houselessness, and foster care. We ask legislators to commit to continued improvement in support for all of Oregon's young children and their families and to center the voices of those most impacted by legislative actions in their decision-making processes. Solutions must be built with families, to work for them.

We urge your support for the restoration of \$1.3 million for Family to Family Networks in SB 5529.

Sincerely,

Children's Institute  
Alliance for Equity in Montessori Education  
Oregon Alliance  
Right From The Start at The Oregon Public Health Institute  
Our Children Oregon  
Family Forward Oregon  
FACT Oregon