



Messages to Legislators from Over 100 Families in Marion, Polk & Yamhill Counties Requesting Reinstatement of Funding for Regional Family Networks

Submitted to Human Services Ways & Means Committee – April 2021

Alisha O.	Creating Opportunities, and other regional family networks, are integral to our family's ability to navigate the multiple systems our youth receives support from due to his needs. Their understanding of our community's needs, because they are immersed in it and live here, is immensely important to understanding how programs, services, and gaps impact our youth. A 'one-size-fits-all' approach does not take into consideration the unique needs of rural communities, or rural communities serving BIPOC, disabled and other marginalized populations. Creating Opportunities is effective and meaningful in their approach to support families navigating challenges associated with raising youth with disabilities.
Amalia M.	My family has received more support for us and my son that is in the spectrum from Creating Opportunities than anyone else ever! With classes and advocacy programs that help us help our son and make us stronger.
Amanda R.	Creating Opportunities is extremely important to parents who have children with different needs. They help advocate with IEPs and understand our struggles. They help with ideas and tools for our children. It is also nice to be part of an organization and other parents who understand what is going on.
Amanda S.	Creating Opportunities has helped my son to start recognizing letters. Without this [OHA Health Equity Tutoring] grant my son was falling further and further behind.
Amy H.	Creating Opportunities has resource information that you can't get from a public school system and they also have information for the older adults too.
Amy W.	I didn't realize this agency was around. I've taken 3 workshops and have gotten so much from the content and the support from staff and other families. During this time we need all the support we can get, this team is wonderful.
Angela J.	Making community resources available to support families and children with special needs strengthens the family. It helps provide a connection to others with similar needs to know how to navigate the often lonely journey of special need's parenting.
Angela K.	We have enjoyed participating in the family activities and we also appreciate the PPE that was provided to us. I feel that this program is important for families.
Angie C.	So often things are Portland based which is difficult for families with children with disabilities to participate in. Continuing regional networks allows for continued local parent connections.
Anne GB.	The activities and support we receive is so important, it is a daily struggle to keep our heads above water. The support we get from Creating Opportunities is great and knowing that they are there and have resources is comforting.
Ashley B.	Creating Opportunities helps families. They give useful information and provide resources for children with disabilities that otherwise parents would probably have a hard time gathering themselves. They also provide an outlet for parents to engage

	with other parents to have an outlet to discuss life with our beautiful children. We love Creating Opportunities!
Becky B.	Creating Opportunities has provided invaluable assistance to me and my child as we started navigating the world of special education. I was at a total loss and very worried about my child's education. Creating Opportunities provided support, advocacy, and information, all from the kindest, most understanding people.
Belinda Y.	Our families need a group of supportive people who understand our struggles, our hopes, and our determination to make it better and worthwhile for our children. Creating Opportunities provides those things in important educational, technical, and heart felt ways with all walks of life who come to our state to live. It is imperative our state government realizes without this organization a lot of people struggle. They provide necessary guidance and heartfelt support in a world which doesn't always empathize with our special citizens. We need Creating Opportunities to maintain it and fortify its activities so families like mine can continue to decide to enjoy, grow, and learn and be involved in our communities. Creating Opportunities is the needle which threads our special needs lives together in so many wonderful ways.
Breanna B.	It connected me with a family that has become our best friends and someone that relates to our situation. I'm forever grateful for Creating Opportunities and what they've done for our family.
Breeanna R.	Creating Opportunities is the only place that thinks of my kids and their specific needs and create opportunities for them to be included and celebrated. We love being around others who understand and are judgment free. Thank you.
Brenda B.	It is important to continuing having Creating Opportunities available to the community to ensure that families who need help to advocate for their children can be educated in their rights and learn how to become a strong advocate, they also assist with systems navigations that can be very overwhelming. I have enjoyed having access to the online resources (training, webinars, surveys, etc.) during COVID.
Bridgette S.	Creating Opportunities helped us make connections with other families and our kids have made some wonderful friends and have had some supports and a sense of belonging over the years.
Carrie H.	Creating Opportunities is a wonderful organization. They provide wonderful community and social experiences for families who may not be able to afford the materials/ advocacy /supports needed for their family to thrive.
Cecilia A.	It is important that we receive helpful information for our family's health and wellbeing. During these troubling times it is hard to find information to help families like ours and Creating Opportunities does it well. They also make it inclusive for those of us that are Spanish speakers.
Charlene S.	Creating Opportunities is the first organization to support my family and make us feel welcome without judgement. Without Creating Opportunities, I would not feel strong in advocating and navigating my son's IEP. Creating Opportunities has created a positive and welcoming atmosphere that brings families together in our community. They offer support to our families and our families are brought together and support each other.
Chelsea M.	This organization has been nothing but supportive. The people who reach out, the love and support workshops are all so very helpful.
Christi K.	I believe the regional network model is a great thing for families navigating life with disabilities. Being able to connect with a person who perhaps knows your school district or the resources in your smaller community is very valuable.

Christina B.	Creating Opportunities has provided resources and support for our family to continue to provide necessary support to our two sons. They have provided workshops and trainings to help with coping with our daily challenges
Christina PR.	Creating Opportunities has been with our family since the day our son was diagnosed with Autism a little over a year ago. We were sent an advocate with whom we got to sit and have coffee with while we learned what it means to have someone in your family who has special needs, from someone who has a family member with special needs. At first it seemed overwhelming, but we were reassured that Creating Opportunities would be there every step of the way and would provide us with special needs classes, advice for navigating school or hiring DSPs and when available equipment for the house and fun seasonal outings and or activities. I am so grateful to be included in the Creating Opportunities community. Sometimes it is hard for extended family members to understand what it is like to have a family member with special needs, and it really helps and is very important for everyone in the immediate family to not only get help but support and to be able to freely talk and have someone else understand. Creating Opportunities is this place for my family.
Christy R.	Creating Opportunities does excellent advocacy work for families who experience disability. Their approach is empathetic, inclusive, and empowering for individuals with disabilities, their families and the community. The trainings and opportunities for connection they provide are invaluable!
Claudia G.	Is really important for my family that Creating Opportunities keep supporting to all the families that we have special need kids.
Crystal K.	This program helps families navigate the world of special need parents. With the support and knowledge, they have many families can help their children succeed in life. When we fall through the cracks, they are there to help us climb back up and which ladder to climb to get there.
Crystal T.	Helps kids who already struggled with anxiety and sensory because of being on the spectrum feel more connected to community since public access has been lost and groups to encourage peer socialization has been halted.
Dallas E.	Creating Opportunities is important to my family because it has helped us with understanding how to use PSW's that work with our son. Creating Opportunities also provides fun activities for our family to enjoy throughout the year to help our family connect. We have used Creating Opportunities for about 5 years now and they are a great organization that we would miss if they were not around because they are important to our family.
David R.	People with special needs require a bit of extra support. Creating Opportunities helps a lot by assistance/support in numerous areas.
Dean B.	Creating Opportunities was there when I needed them, they gave me advice emotional support and taught me methods not only navigating the system but and understanding my son and his disability.
Denise T.	I believe it's important for groups like Creating Opportunities and others like them to get funds they can use to help families through this time.
Donnielle S.	Without Creating Opportunities, it would create a gap in available PSW workers as well as making our parents confident in the supports. It would eliminate useful workshops and online seminars that help us parents with everyday life with our children.
Dora T.	Creating Opportunities has been an amazing support for my family by providing information to make our life easier. Providing supplies such as PPE and activity kits to keep kids engaged and active during COVID.
Elizabeth D.	Creating Opportunities is important to our family because they offer multiple different services. They are also important because they provide valuable

	information regarding anything. Creating Opportunities has helped us more than I could ever describe.
Emily T.	Creating Opportunities has given my child and I the safety of having resources in our own town or nearby. They continue to provide resources and make it accessible for individuals who cannot leave their homes so easily. They connect community members with others in life like situations which does tremendous things for parents and children in the special needs community. Creating Opportunities has connected my son and I to vary important events and resources for my son and his well-being.
Erin K.	The people at Creating Opportunities understand the struggles my family has. They know how to help support my family within this specific community.
Erin N.	Having a local organization with the information and assistance available that Creating Opportunities has is awesome. It's great to be able to connect with other families who have been where we are and can provide insight and guidance.
Eve C.	Creating Opportunities is a wonderful group not only for my daughter but our entire family! Creating Opportunities has been amazing to our family with so many different resources!
Faythe R.	Families with disabilities need support
Florisel H.	It's a Pandemic or not we are isolated because of Creating Opportunities!
Gabriela M.	Creating Opportunities are more culturally responsive to diverse group needs. I struggle with technology and needs assistance with email, surveys, zoom and others. Need this local resources.
Heather L.	It is so hard to find local agencies to support my child and family. Driving to Portland is not feasible. I also refer families I work with to Creating Opportunities.
Heather M.	Creating Opportunities is very helpful in places that are not the Portland Metro Area and Eugene. The providing of supports, information and events that are 'local' is great. Not all families live in those areas and can travel there frequently to take advantage of the programs that are only available in places that have high population densities
Heather O.	Creating Opportunities has been a valuable one-stop source of information about resources at the state and county levels—including information I could not find anywhere else about how to actually access the resources—and opportunities for advocacy.
Heidi D.	Creating Opportunities is important to our family because I know they will be there to offer support and guidance for us if we have challenges to navigate when it comes to easing our children with disabilities. They offer a great community of support for local families like us and knowing there is somewhere to contact to help us find local support and resources is very important.
Heidi T.	Being a regional network has let me interact with people that I feel understand me and my community. Creating Opportunities has let me connect with people who are now lifelong friends, as well as provide support and knowledge to help me and my family make it through these tough and lonely and frightening times.
Jamie S.	Creating Opportunities provides great opportunities for classes; information on different help for my disabled child, and family members; and activities that help us have family time.
Jayne H.	Places like Creating Opportunities are important in helping support individuals with special needs. My middle son has Autism and requires a lot of social and emotional support. We have benefited from Creating Opportunities.
Jenilee DRL	Creating Opportunities is an essential part of our community that offers support to both those families that are new to navigating life with a child that has disabilities and for those that have years of experience. They offer new insights and resources

	to families looking to better support their children. They also provide a way for families going through similar struggles to connect with each other and strengthen our community.
Jennifer B.	We have been able to do family outings that we would not have been able to do without Creating Opportunities. They offer so many resources.
Jenny C.	Support networks like Creating Opportunities are vital to our family. They provide opportunities for our son to participate in events that would be hard for him to do otherwise. They provide tremendous support for us as a family. We are grateful for Creating Opportunities.
Jessica C.	We appreciate having support available within our own community. Often parents of children with special needs have to navigate the Portland metro area for medical appointments and it is nice when we can access services and support locally.
Jessica P.	They bring people together who have some of the same struggle. Creating Opportunities helps families in need and helps people with disabilities learn how to hire their Personal Support Workers as well.
Katie T.	Having a sense of togetherness and friends to rely on is critical
Katy B.	Creating Opportunities has been an excellent resource as we navigate the world of special needs. We are grateful for the support we've received and highly value their organization.
Kay H.	Creating Opportunities has allowed me to be a professional part of my child's learning team at school. I am emotionally supported by the staff and other families in Creating Opportunities, which has built socialization for my son. Cheryl has worked hard for my family helping with supplies, emotional and educational support when I had no idea how to gain the items or skills to support my son myself.
Kellie H.	Creating Opportunities and its classes have allowed me to feel empowered in advocating for my son and his disability. We cannot travel for supports and having a local network to help makes all the difference.
Kelly M.	Creating Opportunities has been a support system for our family especially after moving here from out of state. There has been such a wide variety of resources to help address needs in all three of my children's very different yet very specific disabilities. I have gotten support with advocacy and helping to make sure my son got what he needed to be successful in the classroom and community. I have been led to resources that I didn't know existed in my community. Lastly, I have benefited from the fun family activities I brought smiles on our faces during some difficult times.
Kendra B.	Creating Opportunities has taken their time to educate me on my role as a parent in my child's IEP team through their free training events (I have attended all of them at least once some twice). After a year and a half of attending the free trainings, I found myself still struggling to be an effective advocate for my child with special needs. I then came to the difficult conclusion that I had done all that I could do on my own. At that point I put in a request to meet with Cheryl the creator and founder of Creating Opportunities to look over my child's IEP and hear my perspective of what my experience of being on my child's IEP team. After that initial meeting with her everything for my child at school began to change for the better. Creating Opportunities needs to remain accessible for other students and families that need help accessing their child's education.
Kerri W.	Creating Opportunities provides wonderful resources to the special needs community - they help in finding/managing & employing PSW's; they have great classes on self-care and trying to stay positive during Covid; and they know first-hand what our families are going through.
Kimberley W.	Creating Opportunities my first resource after my child's diagnoses so they have been with my family since the beginning. I get the support and knowledge on which

	direction I should take when it comes to my child's best interest. I'm greatly appreciative for the training on using PSWs during COVID-19.
Kimberly C.	Personalized local help is much more needed. There are people/places that are distinct to our community that cannot be met by statewide agencies. We need places to go to have one on one meetings sometimes especially with advocacy.
Kristen G.	Creating Opportunities has been so helpful linking me to information and a community to support my child with Down Syndrome.
Kristina S.	Creating Opportunities provides a place for parents to go to get help, support and reassurance while navigating the very confusing and challenging task of raising children with disabilities. It is so reassuring to know there is a place I can go for support when I feel overwhelmed by it all.
Laurel L.	Creating Opportunities is important to my family because without them I would have been absolutely lost at my child's IEP meetings. I also appreciate that almost all of the people involved in the organization also have family members with disabilities, they are peers, they understand and get our life in a way that others do not. They offer a unique perspective and have often experienced similar situations. Thanks to this organization we have met and made friends that we would not necessarily have met otherwise.
Leah B.	They have really helped us get information about all the resources in the area.
Leah K.	They have been great support for my son's education
Leslie L.	It's very important to be connected with local people who understand.
Linda K.	We need the support to continue.
Lisa C.	Having the support for family and community to access is a huge relief and has so many benefits for people struggling and keeping this going will be a huge success.
Lorena P.	Creating Opportunities has provided my family positive support they understand how to communicate with families of special need during this pandemic which is very nice.
Lucy B.	Having the support and advocacy provided by Creating Opportunities has been key in getting through this pandemic. Resources and the relief that was provided to my family and I helped out immensely. I am not sure that I would have been able to stay safe otherwise.
Mallory N.	Creating Opportunities is such an important organization that really has an impact at the local level. Even in an age of inclusivity- actual opportunities for kids with special needs to participate in activities remains limited and Creating Opportunities helps break through some of the barriers faced with helping kids and families with extra challenges feel a sense of belonging and community.
Malora O.	Creating Opportunities has offered a wealth of resources and support to our family. As a local and personalized service, Creating Opportunities goes above and beyond to meet needs of families while offering an array of services.
Mandy J.	Creating Opportunities provides valuable resources and support that parents and caregivers can lean into. These families (our family) needs this organization to create and sustain the life my son deserves. He is worthy. Thank you to Creating Opportunities for lightening our load!
Maria G.	Creating Opportunities continue to create resources for the community. Also for the support more resources for parents with children of disabilities.
Maria GMC	Por salud mental. Para que todos estemos educados sobre la pandemia. Para que todos los niños esten en un lugar Seguro. <i>Translation: For mental health. So we're all educated about the pandemic. So that all children are in a safe place</i>
Maria PL	I like the help I get from the Creating Opportunities it helps me to be able to know how to work with my son's disability it's an amazing group I am so thankful for this group.

Marianne M.	It is important for our family to have a sense of belonging. Without Creating Opportunities, we would not have as many chances to be with families like our own. They supply so many resources to families a hole would be in our community without them.
Maribel	Creating Opportunities is important to because they provide support and help to families when sometimes it's hard to see the light. They you realize you are not alone and connect with others. They provide education how to support your child and help him gain skills he will need for a lifetime.
Marie H.	When your child gets a diagnosis, you're literally given a handful of papers and brochures and sent on your way. Creating Opportunities gives direction and support that others don't provide.
Marlene P.	Creating Opportunities has been a guiding light. I appreciate their workshops, support in advocacy and resources. Had I found them 10-14 years ago it would have made a huge difference in the care of my son.
Megan B.	Without Creating Opportunities, I would feel completely isolated raising my special needs kiddo.
Melissa G.	These folks are amazing they have helped us get through hard times.
Melissa R.	Creating Opportunities is important to our family because it gives a place for me to hear and learn from other families who can share ideas and to feel encouraged.
Melissa V.	There are supports and help for my son with special needs that I wouldn't know about without Creating Opportunities.
Melissa Z.	Creating Opportunities is there whether I need support, essentials or anything else.
Michelle B.	Creating Opportunities has given us such vital information and support on how to help our child (and our relationship) endure the ups and downs of autism. They have provided us with group activities so that our other children could better engage with our son. And most of all, they have provided us with a network of other parents and family members that we can get support, understanding, ideas, and even friendship.
Molly Z.	Creating Opportunities has been a valued part of our family. They have been a strong advocate for families and individuals. We have appreciated the extra support in assisting our child to develop social skills and helping with extra educational supports.
Monica B.	Helps families feel supported especially in these times.
Monica MS.	Creating opportunities was able to help advocate for me when I need it the most. If it wasn't for their help and support, my son would not be receiving the hours of care I so badly needed help with. When their help I was able to get the support, I needed from other multiple agencies. Creating Opportunities has been of great benefit to our family specially during this uncertain times.
Nichole H.	Everyone needs something they can cling to for support. Especially now, with such hard and unknown times. Having a group you can count on is life-saving.
Noradeli S.	Pienso que es importante que los legisladores apoyen a esta organización para que pueda ayudar a más familias. <i>Translation: I think it's important for lawmakers to support this organization so that it can help more families.</i>
Omar	Information has been very helpful and have made a big difference for my family.
Patie T.	Creating Opportunities supports families with various diagnosis which makes it an organization that every family can access locally.
Patrice Q.	Creating Opportunities has provided my family with much needed support in advocating for our son, especially as he goes through the transition process. We ran into an issue with a case management entity making assumptions without consulting us and Cheryl helped us navigate the situation that allowed us to move past the issue with grace.

Patti T.	Creating Opportunities has supported our family during the Covid quarantine by providing us with resources and tools to help keep our son engaged and assisted us in practicing social distancing and mask wearing with him.
Peggy R.	It's important to have groups like Creating Opportunities because not everyone has the funds for services, or even for community activities. Most people don't know where to even start when looking for help for their child. I am grateful for this organization in more ways than one!
Phatany C.	With support from Creating Opportunities our family is able to help our child become independent.
Rachael A.	Creating Opportunities is the first place I go when looking for resources to support my family. Not only are they organized and personable, their awareness of what is needed by families who experience disability is evident by the content and format of support they provide.
Rachel H.	Creating Opportunities is an important service to our family. Keeping regional family networks funded ensures that our family will receive guidance and training that will directly benefit us because they know the needs, challenges and opportunities available in our local area.
Rebecca H.	The advocacy, support, information and resources we have received from Creating Opportunities, has been vital to my family, changing our trajectory to a more positive path. My family is now thriving. Even through the pandemic, their unwavering support and creative way to keep my family connected with other families safely has been instrumental in feeling less isolated as our family is practicing "stay home stay safe" approach.
Rebecca R.	Creating Opportunities has been important to our family, as we gained the knowledge of available resources and opportunities to appropriately advocate for our child.
Rika M.	Raising a child with disabilities can be extremely difficult and can feel very isolating. Activities through Creating Opportunities help to validate those experiences and make you feel less alone.
Rosa CG	Creating Opportunities workshops have been impactful as a parent to learn many ways to take care as a parent and also help our kids. They have helped with so many resources that are not available through other mediums. Knowing that you can turn to them for information or help is a great relief.
Sahra B.	Creating Opportunities is important to my family because they have webinars and online information that's provides important info that we need to know right now about COVID and keeping safe and also provide classes and support.
Samantha M.	Without Creating Opportunities my child would have been forced into a class that he would not thrive in. Cheryl and Creating Opportunities provide great advocacy. They have done so much for my child.
Sammeria R.	Without Creating Opportunities, I would be in the dark about a lot of things. Creating Opportunities keeps me informed and reach out to me.
Scott F.	Creating Opportunities is important to our family as a resource to use regarding developmental disabilities. They are important to our family because of the advocacy support they offer. They are also important to us because they keep us connected to other families who have children with developmental disabilities.
Silvia A.	The workshops are very helpful, they provide very important information. They answer all the questions and help to find all the necessary information.
Sonia B.	I recently referred another mom that felt lost because she felt she no one that understands to Creating Opportunities and mentioned what they've done for our community. I'm one of those lucky families who's been helped as well. She cried out of happiness and asked for more information. Creating Opportunities gives us hope and sometimes that's all we need to help us recharge and keeps us going.

Stacey G.	Raising kids is hard. Raising kids with special needs is hard and often comes with extra challenges. It can be overwhelming, isolating, and mentally and physically draining but also so rewarding! Creating Opportunities is wonderful at reaching people and helping them navigate resources to find what will best help their family. They provide support for the times when you don't know how you will make it through. They are there to help you advocate for your child to make sure they get what they need. They also understand how important it is to recognize and celebrate achievements for these kids and hold events to showcase those efforts. This is an amazing organization dedicated to helping families thrive and is such an asset to the special needs community!
Stephany C.	A doctor recommended this group back in August. And ever since I met them I'm ever so thankful! I received support from Cheryl for an IEP meeting for my son and for the first time ever, I finally felt I had someone on my side helping advocate for the awesome person of mine :)
Susan C.	Regional family networks are needed because they understand the specific needs of families in their area. Regional family networks avoid duplication of services because they know what is available to families.
Susanne B.	Creating Opportunities is so vital for the advocacy of people with disabilities because those people can easily be forgotten in this busy world. Families have so many responsibilities to care for disabled children and need help so we can focus on raising a happy child and maintain a happy family.
Tahleah C.	Creating Opportunities has been there for my family during the darkest times and the brightest times. They have been there to help encourage us and cheer with us. When we felt unheard during an IEP meeting, we had Creating Opportunities on our side helping us be heard and taught us how to use our voice to advocate for our child's education. With Creating Opportunities, we have built a support network and community of families that we call friends. Thank you does not begin to express our gratitude for the staff at Creating Opportunities and what they have done for our family and so many others in our area.
Theresa M.	You have been important to us because you've provided opportunities we wouldn't have had. We enjoy attending the holiday parties and events as a family. There are so many things we have to skip in our community because of crowds or wait times.
Tiffany M.	Creating Opportunities has been important because there is not much support out there for special needs kids. It has changed the support to help during the pandemic and it was nice to do the webinars. I got good tips about resiliency and looking forward to activity kits.
Trevor & Heidi D.	Without Creating Opportunities our family would struggle to understand programs and access services for our child. Creating Opportunities is a model organization that both supports families and fosters a sense of community for those living with disabilities. Oregonians living with disabilities and their families require the assistance offered by our regional family networks to begin to experience equity in health outcomes and unlock hidden potential.

Respectfully Submitted by:

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