

Dear Co-Chair Johnson, Co-Chair Steiner-Hayward, Co-Chair Rayfield, and Members of the Committee.

My name is Laura Dahill, and I am a resident in Eugene. I am the proud parent of twin boys, one of who experiences a disability. I am here to urge you to prioritize funding for Developmental Disability (DD) Services, and more specifically in Direct Support Professional Wages, DD Case Management and Regional Family Networks.

The regional family networks are parent-led organizations helping families who are raising children with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. The family networks serve more than 12K families across 20 counties in Oregon.

With a lean operating budget of \$1.3 million, the Family Networks have made a significant impact across the state:

1. First, the Family Networks help reduce isolation and support families in having a vision for a whole life for themselves and their children. The Family Networks give parents the tools they need to navigate systems (education, healthcare, etc.), and empower families to develop natural supports in their local communities. When I received my son's diagnosis, I wanted to retreat to a deserted island so I could protect my son. The Family Network was instrumental in pulling me away from self-isolation and providing me with parent trainings and support. I now have a positive vision for my son's future, and so does he. He wants to go to college and live independently when he is grown.

Impact: Saves the state money as children are supported in their homes and less families in isolation or crisis.

2. Second, the Family Networks help build capacity within their local community to better support families experiencing disability. Families Connected, the family network serving Lane County, delivered a training to the YMCA so the staff could better support children with disabilities in their care. Families Connected has delivered similar trainings to the Boy Scouts, museums, libraries and faith-based organizations, and these organizations are now more welcoming and supportive to people who experience disabilities.

Impact: Help communities build long-term, sustainable supports so families raising children with disabilities feel welcome and supported.

3. Family Networks do not have eligibility requirements, and support families that may not qualify for formal disability services. The Family Networks are also culturally responsive and support parents from all ethnicities. Many parents who are Spanish speaking do not access formal disability services, so the family networks are a lifeline to them.

Impact: Peer support empowers families and saves the state money in the long run.

4. The Family Networks have been instrumental in providing supports to families affected by COVID-19 and the wildfires. Families Connected has provided meal boxes, resources, toys and furnishings to many families affected by the Holiday Farm Fire. With families continuing to shelter in place, families need access to support provided by the Family Networks. Now is not the time to defund the statewide Family Networks.

Impact: Families feel supported during this stressful time and are not going into crisis.

A \$1.3 million investment in the Family Networks will provide the state great savings in the long run. The Family Networks strengthen families, build community capacity, and help create natural supports within local communities, all of which cost the state less in formal services and crisis intervention. Please continue to support the statewide family networks and the vital supports and services they provide.

Sincerely,
Laura Dahill