

## **Senate Bill 531**

Good afternoon, my name is Yadira Juarez. I am the Programs Director for Salem Keizer Coalition for Equality. I will testify on Bill SB-532.

We have lived through very difficult times where most families have experienced mental health problems, fear of interacting with others, and worry about their children's education. That is why it has been very important to find a space for summer activities with the Salem Keizer Coalition for Equality. We promote healing and educational growth through family relationships as they experience the activities of our Summer Program together.

Our summer program offers families the opportunity to make everyday moments a meaningful experience together. For example, lunchtime is where the parents can generate a conversation to learn more about the children's day-to-day life, such as: who are their friends, what subject do they prefer or what is difficult for them. This gives parents a clear image of their children, while they create a bond of trust when they see their parents interested in them.

SKCE attaches great importance to curriculum for every moment of each day during the summer program in order to reach our intended goals, since this must be a positive contribution to the family nucleus. Children and youth, with their parents, are provided with the structure to strengthen family values and cultural ties.

These goals are achieved through activities for all ages, as varied as games, dances, reading, writing, math, early learning and robotics; classes about parenting and strengthening families; and educational and cultural field trips to museums, exhibitions, farms and the Oregon coast--all enriching experiences for families that are difficult or impossible for them to do by themselves.

The most beautiful thing about the summer program is that families feel included, safe in a space where their language, customs, culture and traditions are respected, and where they feel confident to talk, share and feel in harmony with others.

One mom thanked us from the bottom of her heart because her children spent their past summers trapped in the house with nothing to do because of the pandemic. She was so thankful to be with her children experiencing

the activities together as a family and also with other families and children. Another mom and dad expressed how important it was for them to understand the stress that all of them, both parents and children, have experienced, and that empathy and quality time would establish a better relationship with their children and each other.

We saw parents gain a new understanding of the great influence they have on cognitive development, and the social and emotional growth of their children. They learned strategies to increase their parenting skills, overcome difficulties and be a positive influence in the lives of their children. They learned how important it is to nurture their family by strengthening themselves as human beings and spending more quality time with their children to help them achieve success.

For this reason we urgently ask you to continue contributing monetarily to the proposal in Bill 531 in order to reach more families.

Please feel free to call or write me with any questions.

Thank you,

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