



Building Healthy Families

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Testimony of Building Healthy Families on HB 5013

Maria Weer, Executive Director, Building Healthy Families

Co-Chairs Frederick and McLain and Members of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education:

Building Healthy Families urges your support for HB 5013, the Department of Early Learning and Care Budget.

On a daily basis, I see the invaluable impact of early care and parent education on kids and families across Eastern Oregon. I truly believe that investing in our young children and their families is one of the most critical and beneficial investments we can make in our State. Over the past several years, I have been encouraged by the dedication of the State to Early Learning and Parent Education, and I have personally seen the direct, positive impacts these dollars have had on our communities. I am excited to be working in this field at a time when our State is working diligently to foster an incredibly strong Early Learning System and increase supports and opportunities for community-based organizations such as Building Healthy Families to serve our youngest citizens.

Building Healthy Families has been working with private foundations to provide parent education in Eastern Oregon for over 20 years. With their support, we had established the solid infrastructure needed to establish a network of quality learning opportunities for children and families. However, the influx of State dollars, through the Early Learning Division and the Oregon Department of Human Services have truly been a game-changer. These dollars have allowed us to greatly increase parent education and early learning opportunities for families across a four-county region. From home visits, to evidence-based classes, to parent-child activities and workshops, Building Healthy Families has been able to more than double the number of families served with positive supports, evidence-based tools and critical resources. With the isolating and stressful nature of the pandemic, these resources could not have come at a more critical time. Where we used to serve 5-6 families per class, we are currently capping series at 15-18. Weekly parent-child story times are often bringing in 30-40 per session, reaching over 100 families each week.

Heightened funding levels have also allowed Building Healthy Families to increase cross-sector partnerships and work to build early childhood and parent education partnerships with schools, the healthcare communities, businesses and other service entities. The demand for parent educators, and early childhood supports has never been higher. We have been excited to meet the current needs and recognize the importance of keeping funding levels steady, or hopefully increasing, so that we can continue to build up our staff, partners and ultimately children and families.

We recognize the amazing work the State of Oregon has done around Early Learning, Care and Parent Education. We cannot thank you enough for your commitment to Oregon's youngest children. Building Healthy Families looks forward to working with you in the future and keeping you informed about the amazing ways your dedication is directly impacting Eastern Oregon's families.

Building Healthy Families strengthens families through proven family education and support programs and helps create family environments that assure children's school readiness, success and life skills.