



Testimony HB 5013
Oregon State Joint Ways & Means Education Sub-Committee
Department of Early Learning and Care Budget 2023-25
March 2, 2023

Participant of Record:

State Director Martha Brooks, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids & ReadyNation
17355 SW Sugar Plum Lane, Beaverton, OR 97007

Co-Chairs Frederick and McLain, members of the Committee. My name is Martha Brooks and I am the State Director of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids and ReadyNation, two bipartisan, non-profit organizations under Council for A Strong America. Our members are senior law enforcement officials and business leaders, with more than 200 members in Oregon. Our law enforcement members believe that protecting public safety includes promoting investments that steer kids away from crime and get them started on the right track in life. Our business leaders yearn for a viable, educated workforce. The key to that achievement is investing in kids early on in life so that they graduate from high school.

This is why **Fight Crime: Invest in Kids and ReadyNation support the new Department of Early Learning and Care GRB. But they respectfully believe that this budget is short of what is needed to successfully set up the agency and the programs they support.** Opening a new agency gives Oregon a unique and historic moment to truly invest in Oregon's future. Now is the time to provide adequate funds to do it right.

We support investments in Oregon's early childhood workforce, facilities, and infrastructure. We support greater access to quality programs – especially to culturally specific services through the Early Childhood Equity Fund. And we support programs that help to create strong and nurturing families, including Healthy Families Oregon, Relief Nurseries and child care.

We specifically ask you to **increase investments in Healthy Families Oregon (HFO).**

- HFO only received half of what was needed during the short session to put staff closer to a livable wage. Some HFO staff – program managers, screeners, support staff – did not benefit from the pay parity increase given by the 2022 legislature.
- Only one year of the 2022 pay increase was “rolled up” in the GRB.
- HFO has not had a statewide database system as required for accreditation for 8 years.
- The state HFO staff is below the standard for a program of its size. See attached below.
- Lincoln County is the only county in the state without funds to offer HFO to families. They have requested funds for an HFO program.

We ask that the HFO budget be increased by \$15M as follows.

1. Increase salaries above the GRB to a level that is in line with other early learning programs and provides stability in retention of staff (\$2M pay parity left out of the GRB from 2023 increase, \$10M for additional pay increases).
2. Purchase a database system (\$800,000) as required for program integrity and accreditation.
3. Increase present HFO state staffing by at least 4 new positions (\$1M) to come closer to the levels needed for a program of this size.
4. Provide funding for HFO to open in Lincoln County (\$1.2M).



Fight Crime: Invest in Kids and ReadyNation support these investments because:

- New parents struggle the most, yet they wait until later when stress is the highest.
- 80-90% of brain development happens between zero and age 5.
- Nearly 50% of all child abuse and neglect cases in Oregon happen between zero and 5.
- Yearly, approximately 42,000 babies are born in Oregon. Yet, we serve less than 20% of the 132,000+ kids age zero to 3 who are eligible for home visiting services.
- Early interventions reduce child abuse and neglect by as much as 50%, increase school readiness, reduce social and emotional problems, and prepare children and families for success.
- Early investments pay back dividends at all ages.

Early childhood programs deserve your utmost attention and care, but most of all, they need adequate funding that you can provide.

Thank you.

*Healthy Families America Staffing Levels as of January 30, 2023 for Multi Site Programs.

Provided by Juanita Arnold, HFA National Implementation and Accreditation Specialist.

Yellow – Indicates programs of similar size to Oregon that presently has 15 sites.

System	Number of Sites	Number of staff	Notes
Arizona	11	5	Plus contract trainers
Florida	38	16	4 TA/QA; 4 Trainers; Additional evaluation staff not included
Indiana	36	8	4 TA/QA and training staff are via contract
Kansas	12	5	
Massachusetts	24		6 (plus contract trainers)
Michigan	11	7	3 TA/QA; 1 trainer
New York	42	13	
Tennessee	14	4	3 TA/QA
Virginia	30	7	4 TA/QA

Report [Strengthening Oregon’s Home Visiting Workforce: A Powerful Way to Soar Above Crime](#)