

March 2, 2023

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Dear Chairs McLain and Frederick and Members of the Education Subcommittee:

I am the executive director of MountainStar Family Relief Nursery. mission is to prevent child abuse and neglect through community support and therapeutic services that help vulnerable children and families succeed. We are the only program in Deschutes, Jefferson, and Crook Counties providing therapeutic classrooms, parenting education services, and family support targeted at protecting babies and toddlers who are at significant risk for abuse and neglect. We envision communities that support each parent's efforts to nurture their children's emotional, physical, and intellectual development in a safe environment.


MountainStar has had a staff person – a home visitor – in La Pine (south Deschutes County) since 2016. Over the past eighteen months, my community has rallied leaders and service providers with the hope of bringing a full Relief Nursery to the community of La Pine. Under the guidance of the Oregon Association of Relief Nurseries, we followed the rules set forth by the Oregon legislature in Oregon Administrative Rules [414-600-0021](#). We have currently raised \$70,250 in private funding for La Pine in order to keep our vulnerable children free from abuse by strengthening families when they are just starting. This is on top of \$915,000 toward capital expenses related to the new building – in one-time private grants, county ARPA funding, and a state capital allocation. We believe – and La Pine community leaders have stated – that this Relief Nursery model is what our community needs to build a strong foundation for families and improve outcomes for children.

While the current Governor's Recommended Budget includes funding for the 16 non-profits currently operating Relief Nurseries, it does not include funding for the four new Relief Nurseries that find themselves in our same situation. We support OARN's request to the legislature to stabilize the current Relief Nursery services with a funding level of **\$27,084,868** (noted in the DELC budget, HB5013). We want to draw your attention to OARN's expansion request to add **\$2,400,000** for the four new sites in Coos Bay, Beaverton, La Pine, and Sweet Home.

If additional expansion funds are not appropriated by this legislature, we will only be able to provide services in the amount that can be sustained by ongoing private funding. The cost of a full Relief Nursery in La Pine is approximately \$375,000 per year, but private funding only provides about \$75,000 on an annual basis. Without additional expansion funds, we would need to return to having a single staff member who only provides monthly home visits. Children and their families will miss out on the therapeutic classroom experience, and the community will miss the opportunity to interrupt the cycle of inter-generational trauma – leading to future issues and expenses that will become a larger burden on the government and taxpayers.

Again, we ask that this committee add Relief Nursery services to our community. We want to join you and spread Relief Nurseries throughout Oregon, starting with our community.

Sincerely,



Kara Tachikawa
Executive Director
MountainStar Family Relief Nursery