

Joint Ways & Means Education Sub Committee  
Testimony – HB 5013  
March 2, 2023

Good morning Chairs Fredrick and McLane and members of the Joint Ways & Means Education Sub Committee. For the record, my name is Juanita Barragan.

I am the Healthy Families Oregon. (HFO) Bilingual Family Support Specialist for Old Mill Center for Children & Families.

As a voluntary statewide accredited home visiting program for families pre-natal to age 3, Healthy Families Oregon has been serving families for over 30 years starting in 1992.

As Family Support Specialists we promote child well-being and prevent the abuse and neglect of children in our communities through family-focused and empathic support provided in the home. We partner with parents to strengthen families and communities.

Unfortunately, because of lack of funding, we are forced to drive our personal vehicles to home visits. Although we are partially reimbursed, wear and tear on our vehicle is not reimbursable. Having previously worked for Healthy Families in Marion and Polk counties, living in Linn County, I was forced to look for work elsewhere because I could not afford to do my job. Most of my families, all Spanish speaking and or Indigenous, live in various rural areas throughout the counties, the driving is excessive but necessary in order to effectively support families. It has been hurting me financially to do my job. I feel as though I must choose between the families I support and supporting my own family. My salary is in fact decreasing due to rising costs and living expenses. As Family Support Specialists, we should be making a living wage. Our salaries are comparable to most low earning entry level positions where minimal to no skill or education is required. A growing number of families that need our program are being put on waiting lists because we are understaffed, leaving those families and the entire community at risk. With the high turnover rate in our position, it leaves families vulnerable and our job cumbersome.

Yet, our program serves less than 20 percent of those families qualifying for and requesting services.

It is an exciting time for Oregon. It is not often that a new agency is created in a state. Now, at the start-up of the agency is when the right size investments should be made for its success and for the success of Oregon's families. While we support the investments the Governor has made in her budget for the new Department of Early Learning and Care, there are still investments that need to be made over and above the GRB.

1. We respectfully ask for a \$15M increase in the DELC budget for Healthy Families Oregon to:

- a. Increase salaries to a level that is in line with other early learning programs and provides stability in retention of staff .(\$2.3M pay parity left out of the GRB from 2023 increase, \$10M for additional pay increases)
- b. Purchase a database system (\$800,000) as required for program integrity and accreditation.
- c. 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 and.
- d. Provide funding for HFO to open in Lincoln County (\$1.2M).

Now is the time for the leaders of this state to rise to this moment and fund the agency, supply the tools and staff, and to fund the DELC programs at the levels necessary to serve those most at need in our state. By funding early childhood programs, families will thrive.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Juanita Barragan  
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Old Mill Center for Children & Families