



March 3, 2023

Joint Ways & Means Education Sub Committee
Testimony – HB 5013

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

I am a Healthy Families Oregon, (HFO) Family Support Specialist, for Douglas County.

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

Working for Healthy Families get us down on ground level with families to prevent child abuse and neglect from ever happening. I come from a background in child care, preschool to be more precise. I can say from firsthand experience that starting earlier with parents and children makes a huge difference for children and their families. When we provide comprehensive care, information based curriculum, and positive support promoting healthy bonding and attachment it prevents child abuse and neglect and allows children's brains to develop properly and on target. When your brain is allowed to develop on target you are able to form lasting attachments and it helps promote social emotional competency.

The more Family Support Specialists we have the more families that can benefit from this amazing program. We are asking for funding to promote pay equity with other Early Childhood Education programs. The pay equity will help us attract staff to serve more families and to increase the base pay for our current Family Support Specialists. Healthy Families serves less than 20 percent of those families qualifying for and requesting services across the state. My site has had two (2) open positions for over one year with minimal applicants. The cost of living is only going up and to help decrease staff turnover and continue to provide support to all our families we also need to be able to take care of ourselves.

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.



We respectfully ask for:

- \$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)
- Purchase a database system (\$800,000) as required for program integrity and accreditation.
- 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.
- 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.

Marie Cody

Family Support Specialist

Healthy Families Oregon

United Community Action Network

CC: Joint Ways & Means Chairs Senator Lew Fredrick and Representative Susan Mclain
Members of the Joint Committee on Ways & Means Subcommittee on Education

Senator Michael Dembrow

Senator Suzanne Weber

Representative Tracy Cramer

Representative Emily McIntire

Representative Hoa Nguyen

Representative Ricki Ruiz

Senator Art Robison

Senator Floyd Prozanski

Senator David Brock Smith

Representative Christine Goodwin