

Submitter: Stephanie Widler  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services  
Measure: SB1016

Hello, my name is Stephanie Widler and I live in Redmond, Oregon. I'm submitting testimony today in support of SB 1016 and recognizing Regional Family Networks in statute.

My family has been connected to CODSN, our Regional Family Network for 12 years. My oldest son is now 17 and experiences an intellectual disability. They have supported our family in many ways over the years. Having a child with disabilities doesn't come with an instruction manual and there is a lot to learn! It's truly a sink or swim experience. When we moved to Central Oregon, the family network was there having events so we could meet other families and get recommendations for doctors and therapists from families with similar concerns to ours.

When I worked up the courage to register my son for a parks and rec program as a young child and got the dreaded call that they didn't feel they could support him to participate, I contacted the regional family network and they understood how that feels and helped me advocate to find a way that everyone could be comfortable with him participating.

When he was starting his journey in special education, the family network was there to teach us how to navigate and advocate for what he needed to be successful. We learned that the special education process should be a team endeavor, and we have an important role as parents on that team. As a result my son will graduate with a modified diploma in 2025.

The Regional Family Networks have brought trainings for families and professionals in our area based on feedback from the community: from things like struggles with bedtime to sensory needs or assistive technology; from teaching my son about his body and privacy to what it looks like for him to turn 18. I myself have participated in disability awareness presentations for organizations and businesses who want to be more welcoming and accessible.

Because of regional family networks we learned that my son can be an active participant in making choices about his life. We learned to ask him what he wants and how to help him achieve his goals. We are still learning and navigating but we are doing so with support from other parents and individuals who have lived experience.

Every two years families have to come advocate for the funding to continue. I love

visiting the Capitol, but I don't love the stress that comes with the possibility that my family will lose access to the amazing supports of the regional family networks. SB 1016 would mean that we don't have to do that anymore.

The Family Networks have worked to support the commitment of ODDS to assure people with I/DD can live lives that are fulfilling, meaningful and self-directed because families are often the first teacher, and children who learn to be self-determined grow into adults that are self-determined.

To date, the Regional Family Networks support 20 counties in Oregon, which represents 76% of the state's population. Networks cover vast geographic areas, urban and rural areas and support families from diverse cultures and languages. Collectively, these networks support more than 13,000 families who have children with I/DD.

Regional Family Networks have a collective purpose to help families plan for positive futures for their children by:

- \* Providing support, information, and referrals
- \* Helping families navigate challenging systems such as the DD and healthcare systems
- \* Wrapping families into a supportive and family-centered community of support
- \* Hosting and participating in community trainings and awareness events
- \* Providing leadership training and supporting families to engage in public advocacy

I respectfully request your support of SB 1016 to ensure that Regional Family Networks are recognized in statute as part of the intellectual/developmental disability services provided in Oregon.

Thank you