



Health Department

April 8, 2023

Senator Steiner, Co-Chair
Representative Sanchez, Co-Chair
Joint Committee On Ways and Means
900 Court St. NE - HR E
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Support for SB 5506

Co-Chair Steiner, Co-Chair Sanchez, and Members of the Committee, my name is Kristen Corbin and I am a Healthy Families Oregon, Program Manager Assistant at the Multnomah County Health Department. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 5506.

This is a unique and special time now that a budget for a new state agency has been dedicated to young children and their families in Oregon. State investments in our young children are crucial and essential. Between birth and 5 years of age, the brain develops more rapidly than at any other time in life and early interactions and experiences literally shape the outcome of the brain. Positive early experiences with parents and caregivers can ensure that children grow to be healthy, successful adults. Prioritizing young children and their families with systemic barriers who often lack access to quality programming that leads to healthy development and school readiness has tremendous benefits for society at large.

Healthy Families Oregon is a nationally accredited, statewide, voluntary, evidence-based, home visiting program for families prenatal to age 3. The program is designed to work with overburdened families for a minimum of three years, who are at risk for adverse childhood experiences, including child maltreatment. Participation in Healthy Families Oregon leads to outcomes such as decrease in low birth weight infants, increased access to primary medical care services, family increase in economic self-sufficiency, and improved social and emotional health and school readiness.

Healthy Families services can also benefit taxpayers with a reduction in use of public assistance, adverse health related costs and special education costs. The return on the

investment for Healthy Families is a net positive with every dollar invested, there is a return of \$1.46 and for families involved in child welfare the return rises to \$3.16¹.

In Multnomah County, the Healthy Families program is offered and sub contracted through four community based organizations, offering culturally and population specific services. (Albina Head Start serves Black families, Janus Youth/Insights Young Parent Services serves teen parents, IRCO (Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization) serves immigrant and refugee families, and Impact NW serves a large number of Latinx families and also focuses on supporting families impacted by a substance use disorder.)

Healthy Families Multnomah County served over 500 families in 2022, still leaving a large gap for families qualifying and in need of our services. Statewide we served less than 20 percent of families in need of Healthy Families services. One of the ways to increase services to families is to stabilize the early childhood workforce by recruiting and retaining staff in order to serve more families. Staff turnover tends to have a negative impact on family engagement. One way to do that is to increase compensation to a workforce made up of primarily women and women of color that is congruent to the skills, assets and value they bring to families' lives everyday.

While we support the investments in the Governor's Recommended Budget for the new Department of Early Learning and Care (DELIC), there are additional investments crucial to the success of the new agency. We respectfully ask for a \$15M increase in the DELIC budget above the GRB for Healthy Families Oregon to:

1. The need to increase salaries to a level that is in line with other early childhood programs and provides stability in retention of staff. The GRB has acknowledged an increase received in 2023, however that amount was for one year and not a biennium roll up. At a minimum, \$2.3M plus 7% adjustment is still needed to get our budget to the correct continuing service level and an additional \$10M for pay parity for equitable wages.
2. Purchase a database system (\$800,000) as required for program fidelity and the accreditation that happens every 5 years. Healthy Families Oregon has been without a database for 8 years and it is so important for our statewide system to collect, track and process data so that we can comply with standards required by Healthy Families America to retain accreditation and to provide policy makers and agencies with information on the status of HFO.

¹ Return on Investment Healthy Families America Brief
<https://www.healthyfamiliesamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/HFA-ROI-Brief.pdf>

3. To increase current HFO state positions by at least four additional staff to enhance the magnitude of support needed for a program offered across the state. HFO state staffing will provide statewide centralized support for Healthy Families Oregon for quality programming to serve families; this was also a recommendation from Healthy Families America during a review. (\$1M)
4. Provide funding for HFO to open in Lincoln County . By doing so, this would allow funding for all 36 counties to offer the HFO program as required under Oregon's statutes. (\$1.2M)

We look to our state leaders to fund DELC programs so that we can continue with the momentum in early childhood services and give DELC the start it needs by providing the essential resources in order to be successful in delivering fundamental investments to our Oregon communities.

Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

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Multnomah County Health Department - Healthy Families