

Submitter: Kara Tachikawa  
On Behalf Of: Oregon Association of Relief Nurseries  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means  
Measure: SB5506

Co-chair Steiner, Co-chair Sanchez, and members of the committee,

I am the executive director of MountainStar Family Relief Nursery which provides services that prevent child abuse throughout Central Oregon. I was unable to join the online testimony session due to an incorrect link in the registration email. Instead I am providing written testimony in support of the Oregon Association of Relief Nurseries funding request before the Ways and Means committee.

Relief Nurseries currently support over 2,300 children and families with home visits, parent education, and therapeutic classrooms at 38 sites across Oregon. This one-of-a-kind model provides wrap around services for children ages zero to five. Over 40 years of experience have demonstrated a 95% success rate at preventing unnecessary and costly foster care. Early investment works - Nobel prize winning economist notes a 13% annual return on investment over the lifetime of a child for wrap-around early childhood programs. 90% of brain development happens before a child reaches the age of five. This is a very small window to make sure a child has the foundation they need for a successful life, and Relief Nurseries are doing this work.

To continue critical services and avoid cuts to programs Relief Nurseries need a \$5.3 million increase to our baseline budget - for a total of \$27.1 million over the next biennium. In addition, OARN requests a \$15.8 million investment to expand services to an additional 855 children through 35 new therapeutic classrooms, 4 new relief nurseries, and 21 new home visitors.

This funding request will have a direct impact on the communities that MountainStar serves. Over the past two years we built community partnerships to leverage private donations with state and federal funding for a new relief nursery site in La Pine. With local and grant funder support we are also beginning outreach and home visiting services on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation. Without additional investment from the state legislature the children and families in these communities are in danger of losing access to critical, life changing services.

The families who enroll in MountainStar and other Relief Nurseries do not come to us because they are bad parents. Many of the parents and caregivers we work with never had a good example of what it means to raise a child. They face their own history of traumatic experiences, mental health or substance abuse issues, poverty, and other life stressors - all while trying to give their children the best start possible.

When parents enroll their family in a Relief Nursery they gain access to resources, parenting education in a non-judgmental environment, and a network of community services. Their children are cared for in therapeutic classrooms where they learn the social and emotional skills that form the foundation of success in school, in relationships, and throughout their future lives.

I know it is a struggle to create a budget that meets the needs of all Oregonians. I urge you to consider the fact that only by investing in prevention efforts can we truly interrupt the intergenerational cycle of trauma and create a new trajectory for Oregon's children and our collective future.

Thank you for your consideration and for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Respectfully,  
Kara Tachikawa  
MountainStar Family Relief Nursery  
[www.mtstar.org](http://www.mtstar.org)