

Submitter: Beth Dasher

On Behalf Of: Healthy Families Oregon

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Capital Construction

Measure: SB5701

March 5, 2024

To the Oregon Joint Ways and Means Capital Improvements Committee:

My name is Beth Dasher with the Healthy Families Oregon Coalition. I am writing to you again to encourage the Oregon Legislature to fund \$2.7 million for Healthy Families Oregon to continue to provide high quality services to families. The Healthy Families Oregon Central Administration needs funding for 4 additional staff at the Department of Early Learning and Care, as well as funds to maintain and support the retention of staff at all levels – home visitors, supervisors, screeners and program managers.

We want to remind everyone that in the 2023 session, the Oregon Legislature left unfinished business that was intended to prioritize young children prenatal through age 5. We understand that immediate crises in housing and addiction are urgent. Yet the stories of Oregonians and decades of research tell us that these crises are often rooted in trauma experienced in early childhood. It is critical to invest in proven services for children, prenatal through age 5 and their families, which improves equitable opportunities now and gets “upstream” to head off longer-term problems. It is essential that Oregon continue its progress and keep promises from previous sessions to invest in a brighter future for every child.

In Healthy Families, the focus is on the parent-child relationship, but we also provide support to families during pregnancy and after delivery to make sure both baby and parents are supported and well. Social and emotional issues left unaddressed at this stage, become bigger and more expensive later on. We connect parents and baby to services such as Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education, Employment Related Day Care, Substance Abuse Prevention & Recovery, housing/rental assistance, and/or medical professionals (pediatrician, nurse, specialist), as well as other services such as WIC, SNAP, educational options such as GED/etc.,

A recent study estimates that for every dollar invested in Healthy Families there is a return on investment of over \$3. By investing prenatally through age 3 in HFO, you will be building on the success of families and the State of Oregon. Please fund \$2.7 million for Healthy Families Oregon.

Thank you.

Beth Dasher