

To: Chairs Valderrama & Campos, and Members of the Committee
From: Stefany Cunningham
Re: Testimony in Support of Regional Family Networks—Specifically CODSN
Date: 04.03.25

Regional Family Networks Change Lives—And Save Oregon Money

I am writing in strong support of Oregon’s Regional Family Networks and to highlight the life-changing impact of the **Central Oregon Disability Support Network (CODSN)**—the Regional Family Network serving Crook, Deschutes, Grant, Harney, Jefferson, Lake, Klamath, and Wheeler counties.

CODSN is a trusted, **family-led** organization supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families across Central and Eastern Oregon. From the Warm Springs Reservation to remote Harney County, CODSN ensures families receive not only information—but genuine connection, advocacy, and culturally responsive support.

In the 2023–2024 year alone, CODSN:

- Provided **resources and support to 3,655 families**
- Reached **16,257 attendees** through **228 trainings and events**
- Activated **109 community partners** to improve access and inclusion

In communities where families face deep systemic barriers—fragmented services, inaccessible education, and gaps in youth mental health—CODSN steps in to:

- Offer **culturally and linguistically relevant support**, including multiple Spanish-language groups
- Build inclusive, accessible spaces through **sensory-friendly movie nights, resource fairs**, and emergency preparedness events
- Provide **disability awareness education** to schools, healthcare providers, and local governments
- Deliver **family-driven advocacy** in over **150 statewide and regional committee meetings**

Regional Family Networks like CODSN create lasting change. They improve outcomes, reduce family isolation, and help Oregon save money by preventing crisis and reducing system strain. These networks are smart investments—and critical supports for thousands of Oregon families.

We urge you to continue and expand funding for Oregon’s Regional Family Networks. Our communities need them now more than ever.

How CODSN Has Impacted My Family:

My 9-year-old son was diagnosed with autism when he was 3-years-old. Growing up, my family didn't have any close family or friends that experienced a disability, my schools did a really poor job of inclusion, and I didn't have any formal disability awareness training.

When my son was first diagnosed, I was completely unprepared to care for someone with a disability. Thankfully, I was quickly connected with Central Oregon Disability Support Network. They had several helpful free trainings that I took on the Oregon ABLE Savings Plan, transitioning to kindergarten, and behavior. These trainings gave me more tools and confidence to navigate the trickier parts of life while caring for someone with a disability.

In addition to education, when my son was around three or four-years-old, and he was going through a particularly difficult season of stress-behaviors, CODSN helped me get connected to funds to help purchase a GPS communication tool. At this age, my son loved getting outside, and I noticed that he experienced far less stress when he had time to unwind and reset his sensory system outside, thus exhibiting less stress-based behaviors. Although, for safety reasons, I felt nervous about taking him out to certain places here in Central Oregon without cell service. This GPS tracker gave me peace of mind knowing that I could still contact someone out of cell-range if there was an emergency, and our time spent outside drastically improved my son's well-being, thus reducing his stress-based behaviors.

Lastly, CODNS helped me connect to other families who were walking a similar disability journey through their family fun events and their support groups that were held at the same preschool that my son attended. As my son got older, I felt like he needed more opportunities to connect with other kids who also experience disabilities, and that I needed more opportunities to connect with other parents, so CODSN supported me in developing and hosting park playdates, where children and their families were welcome to gather at a park in a fun and low-pressure environment so their kids could play while the parents connected and built relationships.

CODSN has been a life-changing resource for our family, as well as other families that I've connected with, and I can't emphasize enough how much support and connection this regional family network has brought to our community.

Learn more at: www.codsn.org