Hello Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee:

My name is Laura Dahill, and I am the proud parent of a child who experiences a disability. We live in Eugene, where we have benefited greatly from Families Connected, one of the statewide family networks that helps families who are raising a child with a disability.

With a lean operating budget of $1.3 million, the Family Networks have made a significant impact across the state. First, the Family Networks help reduce isolation and support families in having a vision for a whole life for themselves and their children. The Family Networks give parents the tools they need to navigate systems (education, healthcare, etc.), and empower families to develop natural supports in their local communities. The Family Network was instrumental in providing parent trainings and support that I desperately needed. I now have a positive vision for my son's future, and so does he. He wants to go to college and live independently when he is grown.

Second, the Family Networks help build capacity within their local community to better support families experiencing disability. The family networks have delivered trainings to the Boy Scouts, museums, libraries and faith-based organizations, and as a result, these organizations are more welcoming and supportive to people who experience disabilities. The end result is families who feel they are welcome and supported in their communities.

The Family Networks do not have eligibility requirements and support families that may not qualify for formal disability services. The Family Networks are also culturally responsive and support parents from all ethnicities. This peer support empowers families and saves the state money.

A $1.3 million investment in the Family Networks will provide the state great savings in the long run. The Family Networks strengthen families, build community capacity and help create natural supports within local communities, all of which cost the state less in formal services and crisis intervention

Thank you,
Laura Dahill