

Joint Ways and Means Education Sub Committee

Testimony- HB 5013

March 2, 2023

Good morning Chairs Fredrick and McLane and members of the Joint Ways & Means Sub Committee. For the record my name is Lori Colvin.

I am the Regional Program Manager for Healthy Families Oregon- High Desert, serving Crook, Deschutes and Jefferson Counties.

Healthy Families Oregon is a voluntary, statewide child abuse prevention program. Healthy Families helps prevent child abuse by partnering with parents either prenatally, or immediately after the birth of their child. With a highly skilled specialist visiting them in their homes each week and guiding new parents through the often confusing first three years of their child's life, parents are empowered to build strong nurturing relationships with their children, to advocate for themselves through community resources and to establish and achieve individual goals. Healthy Families Oregon is accredited through Healthy Families America, an affiliate of Prevent Child Abuse America- the nation's oldest and largest organization committed to preventing child maltreatment.

In Central Oregon, Healthy Families is in partnership with St. Charles Healthcare System. We have an Eligibility Screener at the hospital who visits families having just given birth. She screens for risk factors such as traumatic family history, inadequate housing, depression/anxiety- or other mental health issues, substance abuse, social isolation etc., which are all stressors leading to poor outcomes for children.

The success of the Healthy Families program here in Central Oregon has been consistent since the early 1990s and continues today. Below are a few quotes from local families:

"Without this program, I likely would not have had the confidence to say that spanking was not necessary when my mom told me that was how to make my child listen."

"...works alongside me and shows concern and compassion for me and my children."

"... has been very supportive to me when I'm feeling "stuck" or experiencing challenges such as unstable housing and lack of access to basic needs."

"I saw how she talked to him, how she kept her cool when he would throw fits and it made me realize what a healthy parent looked like."

During the recent economic and staffing issues in Oregon, Healthy Families Oregon -High Desert has lost staff to better paying jobs and has been unable to fill open positions. Healthy Families needs to be able to offer salaries that are not only equitable with other Early Childhood positions but are also fair. We respectfully ask for a \$15 million dollar increase in the DELC budget for Healthy Families Oregon to:

- a. Increase salaries to a level that is equitable to other Early Learning programs in the state. We need a \$10M increase for equitable pay increases.

- b. \$800,000 to purchase a database system.
- c. \$1M to increase present HFO State Coordination System staff by at least 4 positions to support existing programs as required by Healthy Families America's Best Practice Standards.
- d. \$1.2M to provide funding to open HFO program in Lincoln County.

Now is the time to fully fund DELC programs at levels necessary to serve those most in need in our state. The return on investment: For every \$1 invested in Healthy Families America, communities get a return of \$1.46, and even greater benefits (\$3.16) for families involved with Child Welfare who are served by Healthy Families programs. Thank you for your time and for your very serious consideration.