

Submitter: Yecenia Rodriguez

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services

Measure: SB1016

My name is Yecenia Rodriguez. I live in Klamath Falls, Oregon and the Family to Family Network that supports my family is Central Oregon Disability Support Network.

- For over 12 years the Oregon Family to Family Networks have done two important things:

1. Supported families experiencing disability by providing trusted peer delivered services and 2. Building communities ready to welcome ALL Oregonians.

- Regional Family to Family Networks serve 20 of Oregon counties, which represent 76% of the State's population. These Networks reach and connect with more than 13,500 families experiencing disability, many of whom have barriers accessing the formal developmental disabilities systems. They have changed the lives of families by supporting them to connect with resources and helping families like mine have a vision for my child's future.

-These networks have trained and partnered with over 5,250 organizations and nonprofits to make Oregon communities welcoming to all people

-Funding request of \$1.5 million per biennium. Current service level \$1,392,137 per 2022-23 ODDS Budget Note. -The additional \$107,863 requested will allow each of the family networks to reach more families in need.

The family network has eliminated many barriers and opened new pathways for my family and I. My oldest son, Anthony, was born with Cerebral Palsy. Receiving his diagnosis was extremely hard for me, since in my culture we don't talk about disabilities. I am Mexican-American and when my son was first diagnosed I didn't know who to go for support. In my culture, disability is something that is seen as shameful, taboo, and mothers tend to be blamed. Not being able to speak to anyone on how I felt was very isolating.

Providers and medical professionals kept directing me to services and acronyms that I had never heard before; such as, ODDS, CDRC, ECI, IEP, etc. I had no one to reach out to help me process my grief and help me navigate the new services that

would be part of our lives. For 4 years my son was not getting services that he needed because the process seemed so confusing and to be honest I didn't know what each service meant.

I was lucky to have connected with our local Family to Family Network, CODSN, when my son was 4 years old through a local community event. It was the first time that I was able to attend an event with my entire family without feeling shameful and judged. Through peer to peer support and training I learned that DISABILITY IS NATURAL and that I did not do anything wrong. My son's disability does not define who he is.

The Family to Family Network provides something that agency's and formal systems can't offer. Peer delivered support. Being able to connect and share with someone who has walked a similar journey is life changing.

-Please support SB 1016 Family Network funding during this legislative session!

Yecenia Rodriguez  
Klamath Falls OR