

March 15, 2023

To: Sen Gelser Blouin, Chair, Senate Committee on Human Services

From: Emilie Wylde Turner, Oregon Developmental Disabilities Coalition

RE: Support for Senate Bill 1016

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The Oregon Developmental Disabilities Coalition (DD Coalition) is a group of more than 40 organizations and individuals across Oregon that come together to advocate for the services to further the values outlined in ORS 427.007: to support people with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD) to exercise self-determination, living and working in the most integrated community settings, and providing services for families to raise their children at home. Our members represent advocacy groups (including self-advocacy organizations), family peer supports, DD residential providers, DD supported employment providers, and Support Services Brokerages.

The DD Coalition believes that Oregon is strongest when everyone receives the support that they need, in the way that they need it. The DD Coalition supports SB 1016 which will move the Regional Family Networks, successful peer-delivered support, into the DD service system via state statute instead of a budget note.

Regional Family Networks provide peer-delivered support to families of children with disabilities and support their advocacy efforts as they navigate Oregon's complex systems. Regional Family Networks are a general fund-only program, which allows them to be flexible and fully accessible to all Oregon families who need support, without eligibility requirements. Currently, there are 8 funded Networks serving 20 counties. These networks support more than 13, 500 families. The Regional Family Networks reach out to community partners and have connected with over 5,000 community-based organizations to help break down barriers that often exist in communities and help businesses and organizations create more welcoming spaces that include ALL families in their communities.

I personally hold an additional perspective on Family Networks. I am a mother of a 17-year-old who has disabilities, and I am sharing this quick story with his permission. A few years back, we were a family on the verge of crisis. One of the

diagnoses that my son received was obsessive-compulsive disorder. It was debilitating for him, and he would spend hours stuck in rooms like the bathroom, crying out for my help. He had to finish repetitive patterns before he could leave and if it was interrupted or he made a mistake, he would have to start over. I was a mother who knew the system. A white, English-speaking mother of privilege. I reached out to the medical system, the mental health system, to the DD system. Everyone either was not sure where to refer me to in Southern Oregon or it had months-long waits. I needed help right then. I needed help from another parent who had walked the same road. I reached out to Bridging Communities, my Regional Family Network, and was able to connect with another parent who could offer support because they had experienced something similar with their child. I felt much less alone. I was able to get ideas that were helpful, and that connection felt like a lifeline.

Oregonians raising children with disabilities should be able to access support when they need it. Because of stories like mine and countless others that could be shared, the DD Coalition asks that you support SB 1016 and move the Regional Family Networks into state statute.