

Submitter: Christina Causey

On Behalf  
Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Capital  
Construction

Measure: SB5701

SB 5701-Healthy Families Oregon Testimony  
Christina Causey

Chair Girod, Chair Holve, Members of the Committee:

My name is Christina Causey and I am a Family Support Specialist, also known as a home visitor with Healthy Families Oregon at Impact NW in Multnomah County. We need legislators to support the crucial importance of home visiting services so we can build trusting relationships that make it possible for families to become engaged in not only home visiting, but a holistic system of services. I am asking you to fund \$2.7M for Healthy Families Oregon to continue to provide high quality services to families and provide the much needed support at the state level through DELC.

I am part of the 30-year-old statewide nationally accredited HFO network of home visitors in all 36 counties. Oregon's intensive voluntary home visiting program starting prenatally through age 3 has been in statute serving almost 2000 first and subsequent birth families annually with approximately 236 staff. Our overall focus population are families that are low income and Medicaid eligible. We offer culturally and population specific Healthy Families services to African-American, immigrant and refugee families, families impacted by substance use disorder, and young parents.

The program is designed to work with overburdened families leading to outcomes such as decreases in low infant birth weight, increased access to primary medical care services, family increase in economic self-sufficiency, and improved social and emotional health as well as school readiness.

I would like to share about a family currently enrolled in our program. E is a single mom who began our services when her son was a few months old. I met E through our outreach efforts and partnership with a local treatment center that houses mothers and their young children. E entered treatment for use of meth a month prior to our services, had also used during her pregnancy and at the time had child welfare involvement. Mom herself has an extensive trauma childhood history which included physical and sexual abuse.

As mom transitioned out of inpatient treatment to transitional housing and then to her own apartment, I was with her every step of the way, walking alongside her in her parenting journey while mom was navigating this new life of being in recovery and being a mom. I was able to support mom in many ways, one of which was balancing

parenting and recovery. I even attended recovery meetings with her at her request and offered recovery related education around developing healthy coping skills. Healthy Families program administers child developmental screenings where it was discovered that “E’s” son has developmental delays and we were able to get him connected with Early Intervention.

“E” is now preparing to graduate from our program. She told me that she wishes Healthy Families services didn't have to end and how grateful she is for the program and what a helpful resource it's been the past few years. This mom is now a fierce advocate for her son, has grown tremendously in her parenting confidence and independence with life skills and decision making in knowing what is best for her family.

She now serves as a Co-Chair for our Healthy Families Parent Advisory Board, her son just started Head Start and has qualified for Early Childhood Special Education Services. Mom has a recovery mentor and is connected with mental health services. She gives back to the community through volunteer work at local food shelters and has employment as a caregiver.

Our program approach is relationship-based, culturally respectful, family-centered and individualized and our program supports are vast. Home Visitors wear lots of different hats “if you will” and provide so many layers of support. But our resources are not enough to provide for the number of families asking for our services. Please consider funding an additional \$2.7M for Healthy Families Oregon. Thank you.