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On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Veterans, Emergency  
Management, Federal and World Affairs

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB466

To the Oregon Senate Committee On Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal and World Affairs:

Thank you for taking time to read the testimonies from supporters of SB 466 to allocate funds for the Oregon Summer Star camp. Allocating these funds does more than provide a fun summer experience for children. It is an imperative action to support a robust and strong Oregon National Guard.

I am writing as a spouse of a non-commissioned officer who has served in the Oregon Army National Guard for over 25 years. He is currently in Kosovo with the 2-162 Infantry Battalion. He has deployed to Iraq twice, Afghanistan, and Egypt, along with countless other missions abroad and here in Oregon.

First, I would like to share findings from a 2018 study done by the Dept. of Defense. It found that 93% of married service members will stay on Active Duty when their spouse favors it. The same study also found that military children have more emotional and behavioral problems than their non-military peers. The report concluded: "Social support was found to be not only critical for service members and spouses, but for a child's development. In turn, the well-being of the homefront spouse, coupled with strong social connections with friends or family, is vital to a child's welfare."

Maintaining full recruitment and retention is a priority for our state, and I hope you will take this action to support that effort. A link to the report is at the end of this testimony.

My husband and I have a 5 year old son. While he is not yet old enough to attend the Oregon Summer Star camp, I know that in the future it will be a tremendous source of connection for him.

This current deployment has been a challenge for our son, and I recently sought professional help from a licensed counselor, who strongly urged us to connect with other military youth and families. The counselor said our son needs a sense of community around the shared experience of having a parent in the military. He indicated it can help build resilience, develop self-identity, and foster a sense of pride.

Any National Guard or Reserve family member will be quick to tell you that building

that kind of community is a challenge. We don't live on a base, and we are spread out across the state. While this broad geographical coverage makes the National Guard a unique asset to our state, it also presents barriers in building unity amongst the families.

We appreciate the family and connection events the wonderful staff at the Oregon Child and Family Program provide. Still, an additional, focused resource for children is needed, and the Oregon Summer Star camp IS that opportunity. The campers spend the week in nature, building important relationships with other military youth – people they can call on for support when their mother or father is deployed or serving a State Active Duty mission. They learn resiliency skills and understanding around the mission of service.

I recall 2020 and 2021, when there were multiple concurrent State Active Duty missions here at home, along with deployments abroad. Between wildfires, COVID response, and responding to political unrest, our National Guard soldiers - and their families - were busy. The children attending the camp this summer were likely experiencing those disruptions as young children during an already difficult time of uncertainty. Since then, there have been more deployments and long-term training trips. Each time their parent leaves, those children must tap into their cup of resilience, flexibility, and courage.

By providing critical funds for the Oregon Summer Star camp, you will be filling those cups. You will also be following through on your commitment to our state's citizen soldiers who are proud to to make the Oregon National Guard their service of choice.

Thank you,  
Brooke Bumgardner  
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Research Study Report:  
[https://www.army.mil/article/212578/study\\_reveals\\_impact\\_of\\_army\\_families\\_on\\_recruiting](https://www.army.mil/article/212578/study_reveals_impact_of_army_families_on_recruiting)