

Health Department

February 27, 2025

Senator Reynolds, Chair
Senate Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Subject: Support for SB 420

Chair Reynolds, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 420.

Healthy Families Oregon is an evidence based, voluntary, home visiting program. Our services are designed to work with overburdened families facing various challenges that could make parenting more difficult—including challenges such as depression, substance use disorder, domestic violence and housing and financial insecurity. At the time of enrollment families are either pregnant or have newborns and our services can continue for up to three years and up to five years if involved with child welfare. We are unique in that we offer that longevity!

Our program is a nationally accredited home visiting program through Healthy Families America and all of our staff receive rigorous training through our accredited national model. Healthy Families is offered statewide in all 36 counties across Oregon. Our program has been established in the Oregon legislative statute since 1993, providing services for over 30 years in Oregon. Our model is also the signature home visiting program for Prevent Child Abuse America, the nations oldest and largest organization dedicated to the prevention of child abuse. Healthy Families America is the only program rated by the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse that had research indicating effectiveness with children and families across all racial and ethnic groups.

Impact of our program:

- Child Abuse Prevention: Reduces the incidence of child abuse and neglect by promoting nurturing parenting practices. Nearly 40% of all child abuse victims in Oregon are five years old or younger. Oregon's data also shows that domestic violence and parents experiencing substance use disorders are leading contributing factors to child abuse (Child Welfare Data Book, 2022).
- Health & Well Being: Improves family health through, increased access to primary medical care services, helps with immunization rates, participation in our program also shows decreases in low infant birth weight.
- Support Economic Self-Sufficiency and resource connection and navigation to SUD treatment, rent assistance, food boxes, mental health providers and the like

- We partner with parents to support early literacy, provide parent education on healthy childhood growth and development, which leads to kindergarten level school readiness.

Healthy Families Oregon 2023 Service Data:

- 2120 families served in 2023, receiving over 26,000 home visits
- 63% of families identify as a race/ethnicity other than white and families in our HFO programs speak over 100 languages!
- For every \$1 invested in HFO, the community return is \$3.16 *if* a family is involved in child welfare.

Healthy Families Multnomah County:

In Multnomah County, the Healthy Families program offers culturally and population specific services through four community based organizations. We serve Black families, teen parents, immigrant and refugee families and families impacted by substance use disorder and other mental health challenges.

Healthy Families Multnomah County served almost 500 families in 2024, yet we are often at capacity due to the overflow of referrals we receive that are in need of services. In 2024, 95% of our families were low income and 88% of families were also families that identified as a race/ethnicity other than white, recognizing our reach to communities that may experience higher vulnerabilities and economic disparities.

Healthy Families Oregon is respectfully asking for \$6 million this biennium for the diverse needs of our state. In Oregon, Healthy Families sites would like to focus on stabilizing and expanding teams to deliver culturally specific services and hiring staff that reflect the communities we serve. Healthy Families Oregon would also like to expand our screening teams for outreach efforts to reach more communities in need of additional support and ultimately build the capacity to serve more families. This funding would be crucial to Multnomah County to maintain our services.

Lastly, Healthy Families Oregon strengthens communities by promoting healthier thriving families, reducing disparities and enhancing the well-being of Oregon's children and we need your support.

Please reach out to me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Kirsten Aird, MPH
Director
Public Health Division
Multnomah County Health Department
Email: kirsten.aird@multco.us