

Good afternoon, Co-Chairs Sollman and Ruiz , and members of the Committee. My name is Marsha LaVerne, and I am currently the Executive Director at the Family Development Center, a Relief Nursery based in rural Douglas County.

Oregon's 38 Relief Nurseries play a vital role in providing comprehensive support to children from birth through age five and their families. Our services include child development programs and parental support aimed at keeping young children safe, strengthening families, preventing child abuse, and reducing the need for costly foster care.

It's important to emphasize that Relief Nurseries operate as a public-private partnership. For every dollar invested by the state, we provide at least a 25% community match—and often much more. This model ensures that every state dollar is leveraged locally, creating a truly impactful and efficient use of resources.

In Douglas County, we are able to offer a robust mental health program to support our communities. This includes traditional therapy models, Parent-Child Interactive Therapy, and neurofeedback services. FDC specializes in helping young children who have experienced trauma, supporting both the children and their parents or caregivers on a journey of healing and resilience. Our ability to provide these services is largely due to our strong private partnerships, which enhance the effectiveness of our work. It is this collaboration that makes Relief Nurseries unique.

Helen Keller stated it best when she stated, : "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much"

Thank you for your time and for prioritizing the well-being of children and families throughout Oregon. I urge you to fund and prioritize the \$4.9 million in additional funding for Relief Nurseries, so we can continue to meet the evolving needs of our communities and support children and families in crisis.

Thank you for the work you do, and I appreciate the opportunity to share my heart.