

To: Chairs Valderrama & Campos, and Members of the Committee
From: Kristen Tobias
Re: Testimony in Support of Regional Family Networks—Specifically CODSN
Date: April 2, 2025

Regional Family Networks Change Lives—And Save Oregon Money

I am writing in strong support of Oregon’s Regional Family Networks and to highlight the life-changing impact of the **Central Oregon Disability Support Network (CODSN)**—the Regional Family Network serving Crook, Deschutes, Grant, Harney, Jefferson, Lake, Klamath, and Wheeler counties.

CODSN is a trusted, **family-led** organization supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families across Central and Eastern Oregon. From the Warm Springs Reservation to remote Harney County, CODSN ensures families receive not only information—but genuine connection, advocacy, and culturally responsive support.

In the 2023–2024 year alone, CODSN:

- Provided **resources and support to 3,655 families**
- Reached **16,257 attendees** through **228 trainings and events**
- Activated **109 community partners** to improve access and inclusion

In communities where families face deep systemic barriers—fragmented services, inaccessible education, and gaps in youth mental health—CODSN steps in to:

- Offer **culturally and linguistically relevant support**, including multiple Spanish-language groups
- Build inclusive, accessible spaces through **sensory-friendly movie nights, resource fairs**, and emergency preparedness events
- Provide **disability awareness education** to schools, healthcare providers, and local governments
- Deliver **family-driven advocacy** in over **150 statewide and regional committee meetings**

Regional Family Networks like CODSN create lasting change. They improve outcomes, reduce family isolation, and help Oregon save money by preventing crisis and reducing system strain. These networks are smart investments—and critical supports for thousands of Oregon families.

We urge you to continue and expand funding for Oregon’s Regional Family Networks. Our communities need them now more than ever.

How CODSN Has Impacted Me / My Family / My Organization:

(Please share your story below and send with this testimony.)

Please expand funding for Oregon's Regional Family Networks. As parents with an Autistic child and a child with ADHD, we are terrified for our children's future. We know the federal budget is going to be slashed and people with disabilities are going to be impacted far more than other groups. We need our Regional Family Support Networks now more than ever. We know local communities and agencies are going to have to step up to fill the massive holes these budget cuts are going to create in social safety net programs and services. Please increase or at least maintain CODSN funds so they can continue to serve families experiencing disability.

After our son was diagnosed with Autism, CODSN provided support for our entire family as we navigated a new diagnosis and learned to become advocates for our son. They provided kindergarten readiness workshops to help us understand what an IEP is and our rights as parents under IDEA - which we are terrified is being dismantled before our eyes. They have support groups for parents, respite programs, and provide opportunities for families in the disability community to come together and have fun in a judgement free, sensory friendly space. Raising a child with disabilities is hard and the isolation we face to not disrupt others is painful and heartbreaking. We just want our kids to be able to be kids, even for just an hour or two, without stares and judgement from people who just don't care or understand. It is tough taking our kids to unfamiliar places and CODSN goes out of their way to make spaces accessible to everyone, regardless of their ability.

Our son has hyperlexia and began reading at a very young age. We had tried taking him to the library a few times, but he quickly became overwhelmed, noisy, and we would feel compelled to leave. When I told CODSN about our experiences and desire to have a successful trip to the library, they took it upon themselves to set up a PRIVATE TOUR of the library before it opened to the public. My son was able to explore the books and express his joy without judgement. I was able to relax and enjoy our time without concern he may disrupt others. We have had many successful trips to several libraries since this day and that would not have been possible without CODSN's help. This is a tiny example of the 1:1 support they provide families throughout our region every single day.

Please support people with disabilities and expand or at least maintain funds for Oregon's Regional Family Networks.

Learn more at: www.codsn.org