

April 4, 2025

Dear Chairs Valderrama and Campos and Members of the Joint Subcommittee on Human Services

I am writing to express my support for Oregon's Regional Family Networks and to share the impact that Families Connected, the Regional Family Network serving Lane County, has had on my family's life.

I am the proud parent of twin boys, one of whom experiences a disability. When my son was diagnosed with autism when he was two years, I can distinctly remember wanting to flee to a deserted island so I could protect my son because I didn't know if he would ever be potty trained, able to read, graduate high school, drive a car, have a job or live independently.

It wasn't until I received a knock on the door from another parent who sat and talked with me for several hours that I realized there was more to my son than his autism label. This parent gave me hope, connected me with resources and helped me see a path forward.

Today my son can read, he has graduated from high school and is now attending an adult transition program. In addition, he passed the test to get his driver's permit (on the first try!) and is now attending driver's education class to get his driver's license.

None of these BIG dreams would be possible had I not been connected to my regional family network, Families Connected.

Families Connected is a family-led organization, with parents supporting other parents in their journey of raising children with intellectual and developmental disabilities across Lane County.

Families Connected has been a lifeline for my family. I have attended parent trainings, and my family has met other families at several fun family events. I have learned how to plan for a positive and possible future for my son, and he, in turn, has learned about self-advocacy, self-determination and supported decision making.

I kindly request your support for SB 5526, which would provide increased funding to the Regional Family Networks. The Regional Family Networks provide a great return on investment as they strengthen Oregon families by giving parents hope and direction and they reduce strain on the developmental disabilities system by preventing families from going into crisis.

Thank you for your support of the Regional Family Networks.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laura Dahill".

Laura Dahill