

April 3, 2025

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

I am writing to express my support for the Oregon 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.

Families Connected is a family-led organization that supports parents on their journey of raising children with intellectual and developmental disabilities throughout Lane County. Families Connected and Familias en Conexión provide information, resources, and culturally sensitive support to families across a geographically expansive county.

In 2023-2024, Families Connected/Familias en Conexión:

- Provided support to more than 1,055 families.
- Organized 134 parent training and family events attended by 8,796 people.
- Collaborated with 365 community agencies.

Many families raising children with intellectual and developmental disabilities, especially in rural and Latino communities, face deep systemic barriers. Families Connected and Familias en Conexión offer:

- Culturally based bilingual programs and family support.
- Accessible family events that affirm neurodiversity, such as the biannual Strength in Neurodiversity Festivals.
- Organize sensory zones at community events to reduce isolation and encourage active family participation in their communities.
- Provide disability awareness training to community partners, faith-based institutions, and schools.
- Help families navigate the education, medical, and disability service systems.
- Organize training courses to empower parents to advocate and plan for a positive and possible future for their children.

Regional Family Networks are a lifeline for parents raising children with disabilities. Family Networks help reduce isolation and the number of families that enter crisis. Family Networks strengthen families by giving them hope and guidance.

Our 8-year-old son, Sebastian, was diagnosed with Autism and ADHD a little less than a year ago. Our family has lived in Eugene, Oregon for two years. Since we don't have close family or know anyone who could guide us on how to help our son, we turned to the Familias en Conexión group. This group has been a great support in learning more about the condition and finding resources to better help Sebastian through their talks, activities, and in-kind benefits. The activities they organize have also helped us integrate better as a family and with other families with similar conditions.

The group is made up of committed and caring people who guide us with patience and assertiveness. For us, this group has been vitally important in our family's mental and emotional development. We greatly appreciate their efforts and would love to continue counting on their

support and hope that they can support other families, like us, who are seeking a sense of community.

Sincerely,
Salvador Burgara and Ana Lilia Moya