



Date: April 04, 2025

To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means

From: Amber Myre, on behalf of Bridging Communities and Living Opportunities

Subject: Support for Full Funding of Regional Family Networks and POP 117

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Co-Chair Campos, Co-Chair Valderrama, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Amber Myre, and I am the CEO of Living Opportunities, a nonprofit based in Jackson County that supports individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families. I am also proud to speak on behalf of Bridging Communities, a Regional Family Network serving Southern Oregon families. Today, I urge your support for full funding of Oregon's Regional Family Networks and Policy Option Package 117 (POP 117).

Family Networks like Bridging Communities are a lifeline. These peer-led, community-based programs support families raising children with I/DD by helping them navigate complex systems, access essential resources, and build lasting connections. This type of support is foundational to family well-being and is proven to be both efficient and effective.

Many families can become overwhelmed and unsure where to start. Family Networks step in with the lived experience, local knowledge, and community trust that professionals alone cannot always offer. They build relationships, reduce isolation, and help families become strong advocates for their children and themselves.

Today, Regional Family Networks support families in over 20 counties representing more than three-quarters of Oregon's population. But four networks remain underfunded, and two of those received only half of their intended funding in the last biennium. Despite this, they never stepped back from their mission.

In the past year alone, these networks:

- Hosted more than 450 trainings and community events,

- Partnered with 3,500+ local organizations and agencies,
- Participated in nearly 1,000 meetings, bringing the voices of families into the decisions that affect them.

All of this ensures that the 1 in 4 Oregonians who will experience a disability in their lifetime are supported, seen, and included.

We respectfully request your support in two key areas:

1. An investment of \$3.5 million in the ODHS 2025-27 budget to fully fund the existing Regional Family Networks, including Bridging Communities, at sustainable levels.
2. Approval of POP 117, which includes \$600,000 to expand these vital programs into underserved regions and build out Oregon's family networks and self-advocacy infrastructure.

No family should have to face this journey alone. We must ensure equitable access to information, connection, and peer-driven guidance regardless of ZIP code.

Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your commitment to Oregon families.

Sincerely,

Amber Myre

On behalf of Bridging Communities and Living Opportunities

amber.myre@livingopps.org