

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

I hope this note finds you well. I'm writing today with a deep sense of gratitude and support for Oregon's Regional Family Networks, specifically for Families Connected/Familias en Conexión, the Regional Family Network that serves Lane County. The impact this organization has had on my family's life has been profound, and I feel it's important to share that with you.

Families Connected/Familias en Conexión is a family-led organization that has supported my family in ways that I cannot fully put into words. They offer guidance and resources to parents like me, who are raising children with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The program provides essential information, resources, and culturally responsive support, which is vital in a community as expansive as Lane County.

In just the 2023-2024 year alone, the work done by Families Connected/Familias en Conexión speaks volumes:

Over 1,055 families received support, providing a sense of hope and direction for parents in similar situations.

They hosted 134 parent trainings and family events, bringing together nearly 9,000 people.

And through partnerships with 365 community agencies, they extended their support and created a stronger, more connected network.

As a single mother of four children, I face unique challenges in raising a child with special needs. My son's new diagnosis has brought many changes, and navigating his IEP (Individualized Education Plan) has been an overwhelming experience. Families Connected/Familias en Conexión has been there every step of the way, advocating for my son's needs and offering advice and support. Their bilingual programs have also been a

huge asset, as I can access the help I need in a way that honors both my language and culture.

For families, especially those in rural or Latinx communities, the barriers can feel insurmountable. Families Connected/Familias en Conexión is one of the few organizations that offer culturally grounded, neurodiversity-affirming spaces, such as their biannual Strength in Neurodiversity festivals. These are places where families are celebrated, not just tolerated. They create sensory-friendly zones at community events to ensure that children like mine can fully participate. And they offer essential training to schools, faith-based organizations, and community partners, helping to create a more inclusive world for our children.

For parents like me, who are constantly juggling responsibilities, these programs are a lifeline. They have not only reduced isolation, but also given me the tools to advocate for my son and to continue believing in the possibility of a bright future for him.

I am truly grateful for everything Families Connected/Familias en Conexión has done for my family and so many others. I ask that you please continue to support these programs in this new legislation so that others can experience the same positive impact.

Thank you so much for your time and your consideration.

Warmly,

Liliana Arciga