

Dear Co-Chairs, Members of the Committee for the record.....

My name is Sheri Schouten, currently a Board Member of Dougy Center. I am a former legislator and nurse, and three decades ago I was a widow in search of grief support for three young sons. We found the help we needed at Dougy Center, all at no cost with no geographic restrictions.

The death of a parent, sibling or close caregiver is universally recognized as one of the most disruptive Adverse Childhood Experiences in a child's life, which impacts their ability to become well adjusted, productive citizens in the future.

The internationally recognized Dougy Center has been based in SE Portland since 1982. In 2024, the Center helped over 2,700 kids in grief support groups and made over 25,000 resource calls. These services prevent significant short and long term mental health challenges by providing a safe space for families to process grief, before, during and after a death. But 200 people are waiting up to a year for our services.

Our capital campaign is well underway. We've secured \$7.3 M towards our \$12.5 M goal, allowing us to purchase a 14,000 sq ft building, strategically located in Beaverton. With Dougy Center West, we will double our current in-person capacity from 2,500 to 5,000 people served annually without doubling our operating budget. We need one-time funding to expand our services to an additional location. Our ask is for capital dollars only.

Architectural design is done, plans have already been submitted to the City of Beaverton for approval. But we cannot initiate construction until we secure 75% of the total goal or \$9.375 M. \$7.3M is pledged and in-hand leaving \$2.1 M, our ask of the State. The sooner we secure \$2.1M, the sooner we can start construction, which is projected to take 9 months.

In Oregon, one in 14 kids will have a parent or sibling die before they turn 18. Every day we wait, it hurts grieving children and families who are on our long wait list. Kids shouldn't have to wait to begin healing. Time alone does not heal grief.