

**COMMENTS ARE ORGANIZED BY BUDGET THEME.**

Comments that addressed more than one theme were placed under the theme that seemed most closely related. Comments are listed in the order they were received.

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**1. VULNERABLE OREGONIANS HAVE ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE.**

Fund things like the Oregon Health Plan, services for seniors and people with developmental disabilities, education, and early intervention through college. Fund things that will truly help people.

**2. OREGONIANS HAVE ACCESS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES TO THE MENTAL HEALTH CARE AND ADDICTIONS TREATMENT THEY NEED.**

Please also fund programs that empower mental health consumers to become self-determined. These sorts of programs have proved to be very helpful in other states. These programs are very cost-effective. Helping mental health consumers stay in their communities and avoid costly hospitalizations can save the state millions of dollars, as well as improve the quality of life for the consumer and his or her family.

**3. SENIORS AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES LIVE SAFELY AND INDEPENDENTLY IN THEIR COMMUNITIES.**

None.

**4. CHILDREN ARE SAFE AND HEALTHY.**

As a foster parent (5 teen boys), mentor, multiple DHS committee member and elected officer in two foster parent associations, I want to be sure that those involved in putting together the budget are aware of the fact we are losing well educated and experienced foster parents at an alarming rate.

Foster parents can no longer afford to take in the state's children. The cost of living has risen so dramatically that those of us who were barely making it a year ago are being forced to dip into our own savings and retirement to simply feed these children!

The state must look seriously at making every effort to hit the M.A.R.C. Many foster parents are presently looking seriously at their situation and making plans to leave the system. If the agency does not act swiftly and sufficiently, it may be advisable for you to begin setting up an orphanage to care for the state's children. In doing so the agency can control every aspect of the child's care and hopefully stay within their budget.

Our children and the devoted parents who care for them deserve better!

**5. FAMILIES ARE SAFE AND STABLE.**

None.

**6. DHS PROMOTES PREVENTION, PROTECTION AND PUBLIC HEALTH.**

I am writing regarding the very real and imperative need for a birth defects surveillance program for the state of Oregon. We need a systematic method to identify the incidence and clusters of defects as well as a way to confirm them. We need a way to follow-up with families and improve outreach. With better identification and outreach we will be able to improve the health status of infants and children, and when their health is improved money is saved by reducing the number of visits to an M.D., a county nurse and lost time by parents from work.

If we are not tracking birth defects in a systematic way time is lost, money is lost and children and families suffer. Organizations like the March of Dimes can only do so much; we need state involvement as well.

**7. SERVICES ARE SAFE AND AVAILABLE IN COMMUNITIES WHEN THEY ARE NEEDED.**

None.

**8. DHS HAS THE CAPACITY TO MEET CLIENTS' NEEDS.**

The Oregon Women's Rights Coalition wishes to express support for or suggest the following inclusions in the DHS budget:

- Additional HSS3 positions at OHP central processing to eliminate the need to send as many cases to the field for determination of medical benefits.
- An increased staffing for OHP central to eliminate the need for overtime work by staff.
- A staffing level that allows for the internal training regarding changes to benefits or qualification of benefits so that caseworkers can participate in training without falling behind in their caseload.
- Funding to cover the approximately 66,000 Oregon kids who qualify but are not enrolled in the Oregon Health Plan and the funds for outreach to reach this population.
- Funding coverage in the Oregon Health Plan for those persons in Oregon who are eligible for the Oregon Health Plan Standard. Many of these people have incomes below the Federal Poverty Level. Due to the recent "lottery" there are 92,000 people who put their names on the list for potential coverage. It is estimated that at the current time 100,000 are eligible but not covered.

We support the creation of an OHP Ombudsperson program to advocate for/with OHP enrollees to ensure care on a timely basis. We support more funding for both children and adult mental health services. We support an increase in the monthly TANF grant for families. We support increased access to the Parents As Scholars program.

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It seems that we could save money by not ordering all office supplies through the Office Max catalogue. Even though we don't pay the amount shown in the catalogue, we still could save money by shopping in stores. Just one concrete example is the pens we use. We are paying \$1.47 a dozen

through the catalogue, and in stores we could pay as little as 95 cents a dozen, buying them in bulk packages not listed in the catalogue. This approximate savings of 50 cents per dozen multiplied throughout all agencies in the state could add up to significant savings and I'm sure other materials are similar in cost/availability in stores. It's something to look at.

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My neighbor, who is a senior citizen and is from Poland, suggested that she feels it's best that, if people come in to apply for assistance, they should be a resident of Oregon for quite some time and pay into the system such as working prior to requesting benefits rather than just arriving from another state and automatically qualifying for assistance.

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