



The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 99-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

March 6, 2019

To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education
Co-Chair Senator Lew Frederick
Co-Chair Representative Susan McLain

Re: **HB 5015** – Oregon Department of Education – Youth Development Division (YDD) – **Comment**

The League published a study and position on Runaway and Homeless Youth in February 2007.* We have followed state funding and services for at-risk youth over several decades.

Youth who do not finish high school have lower career earnings, reduced economic productivity, lower health outcomes, and overrepresentation in the justice system. Per earlier testimony, it is exponentially costlier for the State of Oregon once a youth enters the juvenile justice system. The YDD estimates that it invested \$600 per youth annually during the current biennium through Juvenile Crime Prevention funds. In contrast, the cost to detain a youth in OYA closed custody is estimated to be \$146,000 per year. Given those numbers, the relatively tiny 2019-21 current service level (CSL) proposal for \$24.4 million total funds, seems to perpetuate the long-term underfunding for programs that make a significant difference for at-risk youth. Ultimately the state of Oregon can pay now to support these youth or pay later.

Youth & Community Grants are funded from a combination of Federal Title XX Youth Investment funds received from the Department of Human Services, and a General Fund appropriation received during the 2017 legislature. The Title XX funds will be **reduced by \$450,000** during the 2019-21 biennium. While the \$450,000 might be “decimal dust” in other parts of the Department of Education Budget, it is a significant dollar amount for this small division. The League would support adding back this funding from other available sources to serve more youth. If there is the willpower in the Capitol and among voters to raise more revenue, the Youth Development Division would benefit from a greater investment.

Services for at-risk youth now exist in three state agencies. We appreciate the efforts for **coordination** so that youth are not siloed and departments work together to deliver services. We believe that even more could be done to facilitate an “any-door” approach so that these disenfranchised youth are linked to a full suite of services at the earliest possible time. Many of these youth have had adverse childhood experiences, they have disengaged from traditional education, they are frequently homeless or lack strong family supports.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation


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** Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Programs and youth outreach programs reside in **Department of Education Youth Development Division**. Runaway and Homeless Youth program are anticipated to move from Child Welfare to Self Sufficiency within the **Department of Human Services (DHS)**. The **Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS)** agency is the recipient of federal and state funds for emergency housing for adults, families and unaccompanied youth. The numbers of unaccompanied youth are increasing as school districts report the number of students who say that they are homeless with or without the family.*