



*Serving the communities of Forest Grove, Cornelius, Gales Creek and Dilley*

April 14, 2021

Co-Chair Johnson, Co-Chair Steiner-Hayward, Co-Chair Rayfield, and Members of the Committee,

This letter is in support of House Bill 2544. Unaccompanied homeless youth services enhancement grant program.

Forest Grove School District serves families in Cornelius, Dilley, Gales Creek and Forest Grove with over 6,000 students. The District is in rural Western Washington County in the shadow of our more urban neighbors Hillsboro and Beaverton. Cornelius and Forest Grove are also in Portland Metro. There is an ease of mobility for shelter insecure families between Forest Grove and Beaverton along TriMet bus and MAX lines. There is a great working relationship between our school districts.

In the last pre-pandemic school year, 2018 – 2019, Forest Grove School District through McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act had contact with one-hundred-twenty students. Fifty-six of those students were at the secondary level. Twenty-five of those were unaccompanied homeless youth at least at some point during the school year. Forest Grove students (as well as those from Banks and Gaston) must travel into Hillsboro for youth services, such as Home Plate and Boys and Girls Aid.

HB 2544 would help facilitate services to Unaccompanied homeless youth in Western Washington County where organizations such as Centro Cultural, Virginia Garcia memorial Health Center, Forest Grove Foundation and Coalition on Rural Housing Insecurity are already reaching out to unsheltered families and single adults.

In this pandemic school year, 2020 – 2021, as schools are beginning to open, as of February, FGSD has been in touch with forty-six students in unstable housing. Nineteen at the secondary level. Eight of those are unaccompanied homeless youth. FGSD has a Memorandum of Agreement with Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, Second Home to recruit local families to provide host homes to those students who are “doubled up” or “couch surfing”.

As point of interest: of those forty-six, housing insecure students, thirty-one identify as Hispanic. Fifteen come from Spanish-speaking households. Racially: thirty “white”, eleven American Indian, two Pacific islander and three of mixed race.

Thank you for bringing to the forefront the needs of Oregon's marginalized youth. HB 2544 Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Services Enhancement Grant Program will facilitate extending youth services to our students in rural Western Washington County.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Pero', with a stylized flourish at the end.

David Pero

McKinney-Vento Liaison

Forest Grove School District

Homeless Education Network/Washington County Housing & Support Services Network