

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

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to Oregon's children, youth, and young adults. As the Beaverton School District's McKinney-Vento Liaison, I am dedicated to serving students experiencing housing instability or homelessness by providing resource brokerage and ensuring their school enrollment, school stability and participation. I am speaking today to advocate for full funding for HB 2544, to provide and ensure a full continuum of services for Oregon's unaccompanied houseless youth or youth who are not in the physical custody of their parents or guardians and who are homeless. In Beaverton School District Alone, there were 303 unaccompanied houseless youth last school year.

I hope you will stand with me in affirming housing as a basic human right for all Oregonians, especially our youth. Oregon ranks among the first in the nation for our houseless youth population while investing only \$2.5 million every biennium into services for this population. HB2544 provides \$2.2M to support host home providers across Oregon, a model with a strong national reputation, for which Oregon is considered a leader in programming. Host Homes provide youth with long-term housing supports as well as a stable home, family, and support system while they attend school. This bill also provides funding to expand or enhance existing unaccompanied homeless youth shelter facilities, outreach, culturally specific services, mental health/substance use services, and other transitional housing options.

I know the tremendous impact these types of services can have on our most vulnerable student population and hope that you will fully support this bill.

In the United States, half of homeless adults first experienced homelessness as youth. We know that by investing in services for this population, we can and will deter lifetimes of housing instability and homelessness. Every child and young adult deserve to know they have access to stable support services that help them thrive. HB 2544 ensures that is a reality for our young Oregonians experiencing homelessness.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration

Sara Palenstino
McKinney Vento Liaison
Beaverton School District