



MAYOR'S OFFICE

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April 19, 2021

Dear Co-Chair Lieber, Co-Chair Nosse and members of the Joint Committee On Ways & Means Subcommittee on Human Services:

As Mayor of the city of Salem and on behalf of city officials and staff, we are dedicated to the health, safety and livability of our communities. It is with this conviction that we urge you to support House Bill 2544. HB 2544 will increase critical funding by \$4.4 million per biennium for services and strengthens supports for youth (children) and young adults to attain stable and affordable housing.

Oregon has one of the highest rates of youth homelessness in the nation. In Marion County alone, there are more than 224 unsheltered minor-aged youth, 119 living in shelters, and 1,494 temporarily doubled up with others. Youth experiencing homelessness without guardian care (unaccompanied), number 264 in our area. They forced to face their harsh realities alone.

**If we, as Oregonians, want to end adult homelessness we must address youth homelessness.** A top predictor of adult homelessness is being homeless as a youth. Children and teens become homeless mainly for two reasons: family distress and family dysfunction/abuse. As many as 75 percent of youth experiencing homelessness have a chronic medical condition. Youth of color are disproportionately more likely to become homeless. If a youth continues on to adult homelessness the cost to the public system is in excess of \$3 million for emergency services, medical care, housing, law enforcement, etc.

This bill makes crucial investments in services. Specifically, HB 2544 will invest:

- \$2.2 million to expand Host Homes, housing that keeps youth in school or enables them to return to school by providing a home, food and a supportive family. Youth living in Host Homes are 40 percent more likely to graduate in comparison to youth who are without housing.
- \$2.2 million to expand or enhance existing shelter facilities, outreach, culturally specific services, mental health/substance use prevention, and transitional living options.

Thank you for your continued commitment in ensuring youth and young adults who are homeless have access to high-quality supports and services so they too will have an opportunity to thrive and live in a healthier and safer community.

Sincerely,

Chuck Bennett  
Mayor

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY / AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

❖ Reasonable accommodation and accessibility services will be provided upon request ❖  
Servicios razonables de alojamiento y accesibilidad se facilitarán por petición