

NEW
AVENUES
for **YOUTH**

April 15, 2021

Senator Betsy Johnson, Co-Chair
Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, Co-Chair
Representative Dan Rayfield, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

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

I write you in support of the City of Gresham's request for state funding to implement the outreach, prevention, and intervention services our community desperately needs. As the Executive Director of New Avenues for Youth, a nonprofit dedicated to the prevention and intervention of youth homelessness, I can attest to the unique challenges in Gresham and East Multnomah County, where we and our partners deliver culturally responsive services to youth and families.

Longstanding systemic barriers, coupled with the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, have greatly impacted the well-being of our youth. Increased family conflict and economic stress are further exacerbating circumstances and contributing to a significant rise in child abuse and neglect. Diminished access to services and resources is making youth less visible and even harder to reach. With the shocking increase in community violence, the need for immediate action has never been greater.

The proposed investment in programs delivered by proven community-based organizations will change lives. This is a crucial opportunity for the Oregon Legislative Assembly to demonstrate an effective, upstream approach to delivering social services, youth programs, and education that improve public safety outcomes and meaningfully impact the quality of life of Oregonians in need. Gresham's youth are strong and resilient, but they need and deserve the opportunity to thrive. Thank you for considering this critical funding request.

Sincerely,



Sean Suib
Executive Director