

February 23, 2021

Testimony for HB 2163

Chair Fahey, Vice-Chair Campos, Vice-Chair Morgan and Members of the Committee,

My name is Samantha Stephens, I'm a legislative action team member for Oregon Foster Youth Connection, I'm 23, from Washington county, one of my older siblings is living independently and my younger siblings are still in foster care with Multnomah county. I am living independently with the support of my fiance's and my families.

First off, I'd like to highlight that Oregon ranks FIRST, nationwide, with the highest rate of youth houselessness. One-third (33%) of unaccompanied youth experiencing houselessness were formerly in foster care. Of these unaccompanied youth, 51% are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color; of which 1 in 3 (34%) are Black youth.

I am humbled and privileged to have open communications with my family for things I need like child care and most of all emotional support during this global pandemic. I believe everyone is feeling the full effects, most importantly those ill equipped due to houselessness. God gave everyone different types of resources to prevail, if they can't manage it's our duty to get them what they deserve. Everyone deserves a warm home, to not have it sets in motion struggles, which could've been avoided.

HB 2505 Removing Bias from the Child Welfare System is OFYC's priority bill this session, however we have to address bias in many different spaces. I am here to show support for House Bill 2163: Investing in Long-Term Rental Assistance (LTRA) for Oregon Youth at Risk of Houselessness, which is a really important bill to deal with bias and disparities among houseless youth.

House bill 2163 will give Long Term Rental Assistance for at risk youth, youths exiting the foster system and other institutional settings. Just like other bills on the 2021 Children's Agenda, House Bill 2163 will serve all of Oregon's youth into adulthood, bringing a new sense of stability and freedom to unwarranted stress.

By targeting a primary entry point into adult houselessness, the Long Term Rental Assistance program seeks to impact these outcomes by transforming houselessness in Oregon by providing stability and support to youth at risk of becoming unhoused.

Thank you for your time to listen to my testimony for House bill 2163, I urge you to take this time to consider if you, yourself would support long term rental assistance?

Thank you kindly, Sam.