



**A FAMILY FOR EVERY CHILD**

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**PROGRAMS**

Heart Gallery  
Child Recruitment  
Adoption Agency  
Matching Assistance Program  
Mentor Program  
Family Building Program  
Family Finding Program  
Family Preservation  
15<sup>th</sup> Night-Host Homes  
Life Bookers

February 24, 2021

Dear Chair Williams, Vice-Chairs Leif and Ruiz and the members of the committee,

A Family For Every Child supports HB2544, which will provide much needed housing and support to Oregon's unaccompanied houseless youth (UHY) through host homes, shelter and support service programs.

**The state of Oregon ranks first in the country for unhoued youth.** In the 2019-2020 school year, there were 3,322 unaccompanied houseless youth identified by the Oregon Department of Education, which is very likely an undercount due to the impacts of distance learning as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Reports show in the 2018-2019 school year, the Eugene 4J and Springfield School Districts in Lane County, identified 1,223 students experiencing homelessness, including 392 UHY navigating homelessness without being in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

There are limited housing services for youth in the Eugene and Springfield communities. Many unaccompanied adolescents are left to find shelter on their own and many unaccompanied students drop out of school to take jobs to earn money for shelter, food and other basic needs. Statewide, **Oregon's houseless students graduate from high school at a rate of just 54%.**

Host home programs, like the one operated by A Family For Every Child, provide students with a safe, stable and healthy environment to live in while they complete their education. While there are other programs in the state. AFFEC is licensed to serve youth ages 0-17, while most other programs are limited to youth ages 16-21. **This is important as at least half of the unhoued students are of middle school age.**

Additionally, organizations contracted with the Department of Human Service's Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Program, such as Looking Glass in Eugene, support students by offering short-term shelter housing (currently 6 beds), street outreach, drop-in spaces, culturally specific services, mental health and substance use services and other transitional housing options.

HB 2544 would allow Host Home Programs like A Family For Every Child and shelter/support services such as Looking Glass, to serve more of Oregon's unaccompanied youth by providing the critical financial resources needed to expand staffing and facilities.

The need for such programming is striking. The #1 indicator of adult homelessness is youth homelessness. Providing services for the UHY helps break that cycle.

**The unhoued youth of Oregon simply deserve better.** Making an investment in Oregon's youth now will help prepare the next generation of Oregon's workforce and community leaders with brighter future.

Thank you for your consideration and concern for the unhoued youth in Oregon.

Respectfully,

Jan Ferguson

Permanency Department Director