



The force for families | O R E G O N

3/1/2021

To: House Committee on Human Services

My name is Andrew Grover and I am the Executive Director of Youth Villages Oregon. I am testifying today in support of HB 2340, which represents **a lifeline to young adults aging out of foster care across our state.**

HB2340 makes an essential investment in Oregon's Independent Living Programs (ILP). These services are **a critical part of our state's responsibility to support young people aging out of foster care.** These young adults are among the most vulnerable in our communities. They have experienced traumatic losses and are at a highly vulnerable point in their lives. This is especially true during the Coronavirus pandemic that has severely disrupted everyone's lives but taken an even harder toll on these young people. Without services like ILP, they are at significantly higher risk of homelessness, incarceration, and other hardships.

Youth Villages is an ILP provider serving 115 young adults across Washington and Clackamas Counties. In doing so, we offer a wide variety of supports to help youth set their goals, problem solve barriers, and apply for academic/vocational/housing programs.

At present, these services are woefully underfunded, requiring providers to raise increasingly significant amount of funding to provide basic support. This is not sustainable. **If House Bill 2340 does not pass, many of these youth are at risk of losing access to essential services.** Losing access to ILP will directly impact youth like Mike (not actual name).

Mike is 18 years old and planning to graduate high school in June. He has been in foster care since he was 12 and has supportive foster parents but they have to relocate to another state after his graduation. Mike wants to stay in his community because it's the only place he knows and calls it home. As a result, he is barely able to focus on graduating. Instead he attends classes while working with his ILP provider to figure out where he is going to live, how to pay his rent and buy food – along with the myriad of other responsibilities that come with adulthood. Mike has to figure out how to do all of this in four months, without a family to support him or the skills/experience to do it one his own.

I urge you to pass HB 2340.

Sincerely,

Andrew Grover, MPH
Executive Director
Youth Villages Oregon