



January 31, 2023

To: House Committee on Housing and Homelessness
From: Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon
RE: Support of HB 2456

Dear Chair Dexter, Vice-Chair Gamba, Vice-Chair Helfrich, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 2456. My name is Ames Kessler-Templin and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon (PHFO). PHFO is a statewide anti-poverty advocacy organization with a small staff of under 15 members. We understand that leadership comes from those with lived experience and that hunger and poverty do not exist on their own, but rather a result of overlapping systems of oppression that create layers of privilege and inequity. Our values and work are centered in creating systemic changes to end hunger.

A safe and stable place to call home is a basic human need. Every Oregonian should have access to a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home. However, Oregon already has one of the highest student homelessness rates in the country. Over 21,000 Oregon students experienced homelessness during the 2019-2020 school year.¹ The prevalence of homelessness is higher among youths who experienced foster care, LGBTQ+ youths, and youths of color, especially Black, Latinx, and Indigenous youths.² These students' circumstances put them at an incredible disadvantage through no fault of their own. They are unable to adequately study, adequately learn, and wholly engage in their education. They are 27% less likely to graduate from high school than housed students.

We thank you for your time and efforts to improve child well-being across the state. We urge your support of HB 2456 to expand services for houseless children and youth by investing and expanding culturally-specific services, wrap-around services, and homelessness prevention measures to ensure stable homes for Oregon's children and their families.

Sincerely,
Ames Kessler-Templin
Legislative Strategist
Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon

¹ <https://ourchildrenoregon.org/publications/oregon-kids-count/>

² https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/health-of-women-and-children/measure/homeless_students/state/OR