

Testimony in support of HB 2454, 2456
House Committee on Housing and Homelessness
1/31/23

Chair Dexter, Vice Chairs Gamba and Helfrich, and members of the committee, thank you for your time and for the important work you are taking up today.

And thank you Director Sequin, Mr Rasmussin and Ms Fashana.

We have a critical opportunity this session to combat an extreme manifestation of childhood poverty in Oregon. Our state has one of the highest rates of youth experiencing homelessness in the nation. This is a tragedy, but a tragedy we have the power to change. In 2021, our former colleagues and leaders, Christine Drazan and Barbara Smith Warner, helped Oregon take a step toward ending youth homelessness. We now need to work together to continue the progress that our former colleagues started.

We need to work together because youth homelessness is not a democratic issue or a republican issue - it is an issue of our shared humanity. We as leaders have an obligation to look out for the most vulnerable members of our community – we cannot allow Oregon to be a place where anyone, let alone a child, lives without a safe place to call home.

I will just say, as a pediatrician, youth are not just little adults and we need tailored services for the unique needs of this population.

HB 2454 and 2456 will make critical investments in proven services available to youth experiencing homelessness in Oregon. I don't want to take up any more of your time, as I know there are many other important speakers who would like to testify, but I hope you will join me, the youth with us today, our community partners, and my predecessors in being a voice for youth experiencing homelessness in our state. I hope you will support HB 2454 and HB 2456.

Thank you.