



PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Government Relations

February 24, 2023

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

Thank you for your commitment to Oregon's children, youth, and young adults. As the Legislative Liaison of Portland Public Schools, I am dedicated to advocating for our community's houseless students. I am writing to you today to ask for full funding for the youth experiencing homelessness bills part of this housing package, HB 2454 and HB 2456, to provide a full continuum of services for Oregon's unaccompanied houseless youth, those who are not in the physical custody of their parents or guardians, and who are homeless.

Oregon has one of the highest houseless youth populations in the nation. HB 2454 and HB 2456 provide financing to expand or enhance existing shelter facilities, outreach, culturally specific services, mental health/substance use services, and other transitional housing options for houseless youth. These bills will also dedicate funding to providing assistance to school-aged youth and families to prevent evictions or rapidly rehouse them if they do become houseless.

Houselessness intersects with education in complex and compounding ways. When students move around frequently, schools have high student turnover and neither students nor teachers can do their best. For teachers, seeing their students come and go in a matter of weeks, not years, takes away their chance to get to know the students, understand their strengths and areas for growth over time, and adjust their lesson plans to help them improve in their areas of need. Moreover, growing evidence shows the broad negative effects that such instability can have on child well-being.

HB 2454 and 2456 will ensure that more children and young adults across our state have access to safe and stable support services that will help them thrive. Thank you for your time and consideration. On behalf of PPS, I urge you to support HB 2454 and HB 2456.

Sincerely,

Lisa Merrick

Legislative Liaison

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Portland Public Schools