

President Wagner, Speaker Rayfield, Representative Holvey, Senator Manning, Representative Fahey, Representative Iverson, Senator Lieber, and Senator Knopp,

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to Oregon's children, youth, and young adults. As service providers, we are dedicated to ensuring youth experiencing homelessness have the relationships, opportunities, and experiences they deserve to navigate the personal and difficult journey out of homelessness and grow into a healthy and thriving adulthood.

Oregon ranks among the top five states in the nation with the highest rate of unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness¹. Additionally, this issue disproportionately affects youth with marginalized identities; LGBTQIA+ youth had a 120% higher risk of reporting homelessness than youth who identify as heterosexual or transgender.² We hope that you will join us in affirming housing as a basic human right for all Oregonians, especially our youth.

Homelessness is a tragedy — it is not just a personal tragedy — it is a tragedy for our entire community. For many young people, the pathway out of homelessness and into housing is incredibly challenging, but, once housed, deeply stabilizing. Housing restores your humanity and inspires hope for a more connected and healthy future.

We must come together as a state to create lasting, systemic change to ensure that young people have multiple avenues to services and housing free from the trenches of housing instability and homelessness. Lacking safe and adequate housing not only strips people of their dignity, it has calamitous personal and economic impacts. Homelessness generates expenses for a community and creates economic strain, rather than income. Stable housing and access to services is critical for the welfare of one's financial, physical, and mental health.

HB 2454 and 2456 provides a total \$29.75 million to services and supports for youth across Oregon. \$8.25 million will support host home providers across Oregon, a model with a strong national reputation, for which Oregon is considered a leader in demonstrating. Host homes provide youth with long-term housing supports as well as a stable home, family, and support system while they attend school and create their futures. HB 2454 and 2456 also provide \$15.25 million to expand or enhance existing shelter facilities, outreach, culturally specific services, mental health services, substance use services, and other transitional housing options for Oregon's houseless youth. Finally, these bills include \$6.25 million in emergency funds to be used to help school-aged youth and families maintain housing through preventing evictions and rapidly rehousing those who do become homeless.

We know that by investing in services for this population, we can and will deter lifetimes of housing instability and homelessness. Every child and young adult deserves to have access to safe and

¹ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development "The 2020 Annual Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress" <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2020-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

² Voices of Youth Count, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, "Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America" <https://voicesofyouthcount.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/VoYC-National-Estimates-Brief-Chapin-Hall-2017.pdf>

stable support services that help them thrive - and this includes our LGBTQIA+ youth. HB 2454 and 2456 ensures that this is a reality for our young Oregonians experiencing the traumatic and dynamic effects of homelessness.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

