



SchoolHouse Connection Supports SB 658

March 28, 2023

To Committee Chair Sen. Dembrow, Vice-Chair Sen. Thomsen, and Distinguished Members of the Senate Education Committee:

SchoolHouse Connection is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to overcoming homelessness through education. Currently, we are working in partnership with advocates and people impacted by the issue on legislation to help youth experiencing homelessness in Oregon and over a dozen state legislatures around the U.S.

SHC strongly supports SB 658, because we believe it will help address the barriers that students experiencing homelessness often face in getting to school, getting to school consistently and on time, and having the support and resources they need to succeed once there. This will ultimately improve academic achievement for those youth and raise the performance of the participating districts.

Across the U.S., nearly 1.1 million students preK-12 experienced homelessness during the 2020-2021 school year, including more than 18,400 homeless students in Oregon¹. Oregon has the highest rate of youth homelessness in the U.S.² The chronic absenteeism rate for homeless students was 58.4 percent compared to 30.9 percent for students overall. The struggles students experiencing homelessness have getting to school negatively impact their ability to graduate. Consider that homeless students in Oregon had a 55.4 percent graduation rate in 2020-2021, compared to poor students at 74.4 percent and students overall at 80 percent³.

We believe the inclusion of data collection and reporting included in SB 658 recognizes these disparities as it requires documentation of the demographic composition of the homeless students served and the percentage of homeless students who receive their diploma in the years included in the pilot.

This bill will create a system of greater support for districts that need additional resources to better equip their homeless students so that they graduate and have an opportunity to pursue higher education and other post-secondary opportunities. We know that lack of an education is the most important determinant adult homelessness. For these reasons we strongly encourage the Oregon legislature to pass SB 658.

Rodd Monts
Director of State Policy
SchoolHouse Connection
rodd@schoolhouseconnection.org

¹ SchoolHouse Connection, University of Michigan Poverty Solutions [Data Profile](#) (2023).

² Oregon Statewide [Report Card](#) 2021-2022

³ SchoolHouse Connection, University of Michigan Poverty Solutions [Data Profile](#) (2023).