

Submitter: Penny Bewick
On Behalf Of: Myself and New Avenues for Youth
Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3079

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Feb. 9, 2025

To: House Committee on Early Childhood & Human Services
Oregon Legislature
Via Email

From: Penny Bewick
Board member, New Avenues for Youth

RE: House Bill 3079

Chair Hartman, Vice Chair Nguyen and Committee members:

I am writing today to ask for your support for House Bill 3079 (HB 3079). HB 3079 would play a critical role in the efforts of New Avenues for Youth, and other great, and dedicated organizations serving our Oregon youth, to stop the cycle of homelessness across our state.

Our homelessness crisis has become ever more critical over the last decade. New Avenues and other nonprofits have developed innovative programs to assist young people facing unstable conditions. Our programs are designed to provide the necessary tools for young people facing housing instability, and homelessness, to stabilize and have a chance for productive and successful futures. Over the last few years, the state's Youth Experiencing Homelessness (YEH) program has provided much needed assistance to this effort. As you know, costs are increasing and funding sources are becoming more and more unstable. A greater commitment from the state of Oregon is even more critical now, then ever, to ensure that we can continue our efforts to help homeless youth today and, most importantly, prevent chronic adult homelessness over the long term. HB3079 would stabilize funding available under the YEH program so that nonprofits like New Avenues can continue their important work and, importantly, it would enable DHS to expand YEH funding to counties that have no options for housing unstable youth. Additionally, HB3079 would begin to develop a long-term allocation strategy that will help stabilize our statewide response to youth homelessness and create a foundation for real, systemic change.

HB3079 would intensify the state's commitment to ending youth homelessness. The work of this Committee is critical if we are ever going to truly cure Oregon's homelessness crisis. The answer to curing the homelessness epidemic is to catch these youth when instability or homelessness begins, not wait until they are imbedded in the adult homeless population. Nonprofits like New Avenues for Youth, and other great youth-serving organizations across our state, have demonstrated time and again that the single most effective way to end adult homelessness is to intervene early, when the individuals are still young, providing housing, education, counseling, job training and other services that break the cycle of homelessness before it becomes a chronic problem.

Please pass HB3079 out of the House Committee on Early Childhood & Human Services and continue to throw your support behind it when it is subsequently referred to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means, and ensure that critical funding that this bill promises is provided to support nonprofits across Oregon dedicated to ending chronic homelessness.

If I can provide any support for your efforts, or answer any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Thank you.