

Submitter: Melissa Frantz
On Behalf Of: Myself and Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3079

Chair Hartman, Vice Chair Nguyen, Vice Chair Scharf, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to Oregon's children, youth, and young adults. My name is Melissa, and I work with youth experiencing homelessness who are unaccompanied.

I currently support young Oregonians through the Second Home Program. It is a volunteer host home program for unaccompanied youth 16 and older who are working towards High School completion. Our youth and our hosts are incredible people who share the belief that building a safe life starts with safe and stable living situations. Our hosted students have gone on to complete high school, attend college and trade schools, and in some cases, have formed meaningful and lasting bonds with their host families. We rely on funding through the Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program, as do the many partners we work with across Oregon, who have committed themselves to ending homelessness for young people.

HB 3079 provides funding support for homeless youth services across Oregon through the Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program, a model with a strong national reputation, for which Oregon is considered a leader. This Program provides youth with long-term housing support as well as a stable home, mentorship, and support system while they attend school. This legislation also provides 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.

In the United States, half of homeless adults first experienced houselessness in their youth. We know that by investing in services for this population that we can and will deter lifetimes of housing instability and homelessness. Every child and young adult deserves to have access to safe and stable support services that help them thrive. HB 3079 ensures that this is a reality for our young Oregonians experiencing homelessness.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.
Melissa Frantz