

February 13, 2025

TO: House Committee on Revenue
FROM: Grace Fortson, Our Children Oregon
SUBJECT: Support for HB 3079

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

My name is Grace Fortson, I am the Policy and Advocacy Manager with Our Children Oregon (OCO). OCO is a statewide nonprofit committed to whole child wellbeing through the Children's Agenda- a comprehensive legislative agenda created and supported by our over 135 member organizations across the state.

I am here to testify in support of HB 3079. Supporting Oregon's youth is key to supporting Oregon's future. Upstream investments such as this will save Oregon significant money later on. Not only will investing in youth experience houselessness ensure that youth have the opportunity to learn and thrive, it will reduce the number of adults experiencing houselessness in the future. With 50% of Oregon's renting households experiencing rental cost burden and 3.3% of Oregon's students lacking stable housing, it is imperative to improve our response to youth houselessness¹ in this context.

Further, this is an equity issue. Hispanic/Latino, Black/African American, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders are overrepresented in programs for houseless youth². This is due to many contributing factors, including

¹ <https://ourchildrenoregon.org/publications/oregon-kids-count/>

² <https://digitalcollections.library.oregon.gov/nodes/view/194610>

intentional state divestment in these communities. Addressing these disparities now is a key step in resolving economic disparities in the future.

Housing is a basic human right for all Oregonians, especially our youth. Oregon has the 4th highest number of houseless youth in the nation. 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.

We urge you to vote yes on HB 3079.

Thank you,

Grace Fortson, Policy and Advocacy Manager, Our Children Oregon

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