

Central Oregon Civic Action Project



24 February 2025

Testimony in Support of [HB3079](#) – Relating to Youth Homelessness

Submitted by: Josh Burgess; Executive Director, Central Oregon Civic Action Project

This testimony presents emphatic support for HB3079 by an extraordinary group of people.

In September and October of 2024, a demographically representative group of Central Oregonians participated in the [Deschutes Civic Assembly on Youth Homelessness](#). Over the course of five days of learning and deliberation, thirty local residents reached 75% or higher consensus on [22 recommendations](#) for prioritizing resources to help end youth homelessness.

The Assembly's delegates were randomly selected from across Deschutes County, reflecting a microcosm in terms of age, gender, race/ethnicity, geographic location of residence, political party, housing status, and educational attainment. For nearly three days, twenty eight subject matter experts (government and school district officials, service providers, people with personal experience) presented in-depth testimony to the Assembly. The delegates then spent two full days deliberating and voting on potential solutions. The 22 recommendations were presented to the Board of Directors of the Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council, Deschutes Board of County Commissioners, and Bend City Council. Those entities are today shaping policy in direct response to the recommendations, a testimony to the legitimacy and power of the Assembly's community voices.

Quite simply, our communities need further resources to tackle the heartbreaking challenges associated with youth homelessness. Many of the recommendations reached by the Civic Assembly address both root causes (e.g. structural reforms to foster care and behavioral health systems) and direct assistance to youth and young adults experiencing homelessness (more funding for shelters, transportation, and establishment of a regional services hub for young people). By addressing these issues for young people, we can reduce the numbers of adults requiring additional services in the future.

This first-of-its-kind civic assembly for the region was a partnership between the City of Bend, Deschutes County, the OSU Cascades Laboratory for the American Conversation, the Central Oregon Youth Advisory Board, and numerous nonprofits. We believe this provides a blueprint improving governance through deliberative democracy on a wide range of issues statewide.

Thank you for your service,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Josh Burgess' in a cursive script.

Josh Burgess
Colonel, U.S. Air Force (Retired)
Executive Director, Central Oregon Civic Action Project