

February 25, 2025

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 Mary Ferrell and I am the Executive Director of Maslow Project, dedicated to serving homeless youth and families in Southern Oregon for over 20 years. I am here today in support of HB 3079 and urge you to ensure continued funding for a full continuum of services for Oregon's unhoused children, youth, and families.

As you know, Oregon has the 4th highest number of homeless youth in the nation. This is not just a statistic; it represents thousands of young lives in crisis. At Maslow Project, we see the faces behind these numbers every day. Sarah is 7 and lives in Southern Oregon. She missed kindergarten and the start of 1st grade because of her family's severe housing instability. Thanks to the funding our agency received from the Youth Emergency Housing Assistance, Sarah has now been permanently housed and started her first ever day of school this past fall. She had a big smile on her face and said it was the best day ever!

Last year alone, we served over 2,000 homeless youth and families across Southern Oregon. Children who experience homelessness are more likely to go hungry, have learning gaps and not graduate high school, the leading predictor of chronic adult homelessness.

HB 3079 provides critical funding support for homeless youth services, addressing the long-standing gap between school-based outreach to MKV youth and housing assistance. This legislation will give children from birth through high school a safe place to grow up and a better chance at lifelong stability and success.

HB 3079 dedicates funding to prevent evictions and rapidly rehouse school-aged youth and families who become homeless. This is vital because we know that half of homeless adults first experienced homelessness in their youth. By investing in services now, we can prevent lifetimes of housing instability. This funding is truly an upstream investment in a better future for children and Oregon.

I urge you to support this vital legislation. It's not just an investment in programs; it's an investment in the future. Help us continue to end youth homelessness sooner, preserving hope. Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,
Mary Ferrell
Executive Director
Maslow Project