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February 26, 2025

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Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities  
2475 SE Ladd Ave #231  
Portland, OR 97214

RE: Testimony on House Bill 3079 (Neutral)

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

The Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) works to create change so that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) can live full lives as valued members of their communities. A safe and stable home is essential for young people to grow, flourish, and reach their full potential. Youth with disabilities, including those with IDD, experience homelessness at a significantly higher rate than those without disabilities. Researchers have found that nearly 5% of students with disabilities experience homelessness compared with 3% among students without disabilities.<sup>1</sup>

The Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program (YEHP) plays a critical role in connecting youth impacted by homelessness with community-based organizations. Those organizations recognize the distinct challenges of young people with disabilities and help address the housing gap that sees much higher rates of homelessness as compared with their non-disabled peers. HUD considers people who have experienced homeless for at least a year while having a disabling condition “chronically homeless.”<sup>2</sup> Those with disabilities are also more

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<sup>1</sup> Bock, Emily, Paige Bochu, and Eric Rubenstein. “Homelessness and Disability in Public-School Students.” *Pediatrics*, 151(4) (April 2023). Available at <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2022-059885>.

<sup>2</sup> 24 CFR 578.2 (defining “chronically homeless” under the Continuum of Care Program); see also 24 CFR 91.5.



likely to see their health deteriorate, as a result of sleeping outside.<sup>3</sup> By focusing on safe and stable housing at a young age, YEHP helps to interrupt chronic homelessness and prevent the exacerbation of existing disabilities that have lifelong impacts.

Fully funding the YEHP would sustain its capacity to support youth with disabilities, including those with IDD, experiencing homelessness. With adequate resources, the program could increase outreach efforts and expand to new communities, ensuring that more youth with disabilities are linked to needed supports. Those resources would help the program to connect youth with comprehensive wraparound services and a more robust network of mental or behavioral health care that fosters long-term stability. House Bill 3079-2 also has the potential to lead to better training for providers who serve homeless youth with disabilities.

The YEHP helps stabilize the lives of youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities at risk of or experiencing homelessness who might otherwise fall through the cracks. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important program.

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<sup>3</sup> National Health Care for the Homeless Council, “Homelessness and Health: What’s the Connection?” (February 2019). Available at <https://nhchc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/homelessness-and-health.pdf>