

Submitter: Edward Buck-Shannon
On Behalf Of: EMO
Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3079

February 26, 2025

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

My name is Edward Buck-Shannon and I am the Public Policy Associate at Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon. We are a state-wide association of faith groups with more than 750 member congregations. We serve thousands of Oregonians through our direct service programs including Second Home, a host home program with 56 youth, partially funded by YEHP.

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) would like to thank you for your ongoing commitment to Oregon's children, youth, and young adults, in addition to the work of our member congregations and denominations around the state. The Legislature has made significant investments in services and support for youth experiencing homelessness during past Legislative Sessions but there is still so much work to be done.

Currently, Oregon has the 4th highest number of unaccompanied houseless youth in the country. Oregon was previously 1st in the nation for youth homelessness but our situation has improved significantly since the legislature began investing in these houseless youth. However, these services are still funded well below the \$150M needed to end youth homelessness.

HB 3079 provides financing to expand or enhance existing shelter facilities, outreach, culturally specific services, mental health/substance use services, and other transitional housing options for homeless youth. These bills also dedicate funding to assist school-aged youth and families to prevent evictions or rapidly rehouse them if they do become houseless.

EMO stands in full support of HB 3079. HB 3079 provides support for homeless youth and families across Oregon through two programs: first, 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. Second is the OHCS Youth Emergency Housing Assistance Program which provides critical support like rent and transportation assistance to struggling families.

The YEHA program has seen incredible success in addressing homelessness in rural areas, especially in Southern Oregon. Organizations like the Maslow Project and FARA4Kids have used the funding to house families that had been camping in the woods and help build new shelter facilities. HB 3079 not only raises funding for YEHA but also expands eligibility considerably to include families with young children, the demographic most at risk of becoming homeless.

The best way to address adult homelessness is by ending youth homelessness. It's once again time for Oregon to affirm our commitment to our youth. We appreciate your consideration and continued support.

Thank You