

March 26, 2025

Dear Co-Chair Woods, Co-Chair Gomberg, Members of the Committee,

My name is Nicole Ritterbush and I am the Housing and Outreach Supervisor with Maslow Project of Jackson and Josephine Counties. I am here to provide testimony in support of HB 5011, to fund Youth Emergency Homeless Assistance to \$15m and to support HB 3079 to broaden the eligibility to families experiencing homelessness with children not yet in kindergarten.

As you know, Oregon has the 4th highest number of homeless youth in the nation. Maslow Project is a nonprofit that serves youth, families and pregnant people who are experiencing homelessness. Last year, we served over 2,000 homeless youth and families across Southern Oregon. I also have the privilege to case manage clients in the rural areas of Josephine County. Jacob and Katie are two youth who are experiencing homelessness and experienced some significant traumas. They have worked very hard to overcome their barriers, are on track to complete high school very soon and are determined to change the path they were on. This would not have been possible without the funding they received to become stably housed with YEHA funding. There are so many more youth and families that can say the same.

Supporting youth and families experiencing homelessness does indeed require the support of a full continuum of services to achieve stable housing. These funds support so many aspects to stably housing youth, keeping youth enrolled and engaged in school, continuing education support services for support staff, shelter support, direct housing support and barrier removal support. Many clients have barriers and need those barriers removed such as past due utilities and or monies owed to landlords, some just need that large deposit support and or rental support to get that hand up not hand out. These funds support that we can Meet Clients Where They Are At and help set them up for staying stably housed with case management and life skills. Every child and young adult deserves access to a safe and stable home and services to help them thrive. We are not able to support our youth and families without your support.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration



Nicole Ritterbush
Housing and Outreach Supervisor