

Co-Chairs Woods and Gomberg,

Hello! My name is Rita Morgan, and I am a Social Studies teacher at Mountainside High School in the Beaverton School District. I have been a proud teacher in the district for nearly 25 years, and started and helped expand Club Hope to ½ of the high schools in Beaverton – a club supporting students experiencing homelessness through advocacy, awareness, assistance and outreach.

I am here today to urge you to increase funding from \$5m to \$15m to maintain current services and increase outreach to urban and suburban communities. Yes, co-workers and neighbors may not recognize poverty, housing insecurity and homelessness in Beaverton. The fancy school where I work has more and more students identified as M-V every year. Beaverton has more “hidden”, working families in cars, unaccompanied students in tents by some bushes near Walmart, etc. There’s a shocking lack of services throughout the metro area for youth. Especially for shelters. But I believe in Oregon. The land of public bleaches. We can do better. We take care of kids.

For example, I had a student needing things but not wanting to take or admit. As a stubborn person, I found a way and gave him shoes – comfort – trust - believed in self – grades.

Just as the horrific downward spiral goes up. Quickly with kids. Amazingly resilient.

In rural Oregon this biennium, the OHCS YEHA program is keeping families housed and is helping families rapidly regain housing when experiencing homelessness.

I urge you to stand with Oregon students, teachers and families by expanding the YEHA program to the entire state.

Thank you.

Since it’s Spring Break I can’t share Club Hope bookmarks and more, so I’d love to invite you all to attend a Club Hope meeting at Mountainside! Details are available in my written testimony.

Written Testimony Additions:

Thank you for making a tangible and positive difference for so many. And thank you for truly listening and hearing the advice of so many exceptional Oregonians.

If there’s any way the students of Club Hope and I may partner, advocate/amplify/advance, the work you are doing, and/or if you have ideas for us, please contact us! I started Club Hope with the intention of supporting and connecting existing services and *trying* to fill in the gaps. The power of student voice is unstoppable! And supporting STUDENTS experiencing homelessness unites a community. This time, you all get to provide HOPE by expanding the YEHA program statewide.

Again, you are welcome to join Club Hope meetings and/or talk more to this teacher! (I had pages written, but felt like a invitation was kinder!) Thank you for your time. Thank you for the hope and for supporting students, families and all Oregonians.

With gratitude,

Rita Morgan

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<https://sites.google.com/view/club-hope/mountainside>