

This is Dennis Morrow (Executive Director) from Janus Youth Programs. We are a community-based organization that serves youth experiencing homelessness in Portland and Multnomah County. We operate a youth street outreach program which made contact with 2,321 youth in the past year and provided 27,000 first aid and hygiene supplies to these youth. We also operate the only shelters for transition-age (16-24) homeless youth in Multnomah County serving over 500 youth in the past year. And we have specialized rental support programs which helped 284 youth exit the streets with 74 of these being young mothers with infant children.

Janus is submitting our strong support for **HB 3970** which is a critical piece of legislation that addresses one of the most urgent and persistent issues facing Oregon: **youth homelessness**. House Bill 3970 provides a forward-looking, collaborative approach to supporting youth experiencing homelessness by directing the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Housing and Community Services Department (HCSD) to develop recommendations for the biennial Governor's budget to **ensure sufficient funding is allocated to meet the needs of these vulnerable young people**. By expanding eligibility for support through the Emergency Housing Account and establishing dedicated grant programs for youth, this bill takes an important step toward closing the gaps that currently leave far too many young Oregonians without shelter, stability, or hope for the future.

For almost a decade, the state provided almost no support for programs to address homelessness facing our youth. The results are clear. Tens of thousands of youth who were homeless have gone on to be chronically homeless as adults. According to study after study, youth homelessness is the #1 indicator of chronic adult homelessness. That means that until we help end the youth crisis, we won't really bend the curve of adult homelessness. We want to note that Youth Experiencing Homelessness (YEH) programs are successful. 85% or more of youth served go on to NOT face homelessness as an adult. Janus research shows that for every male youth who does age into adult homelessness the community will pay over \$1 million in lifetime costs and for every female it will be over \$2 million (due to costs associated with their children). HB3970 will literally help save Oregon billions of dollars and literally offer thousands of youth a chance to find a way "off the streets."

An example of the impact of these funds:

"Orlando" is a 19 year old Native American and Latina youth whom our Yellow Brick Road Street Outreach team met in mid October. At that time Orlando was disconnected from family and living outdoors in a remote camp that was inaccessible from public transportation and kept her removed from homeless youth resources. Our Outreach Specialists, Max & Sally, engaged with Orlando over the next several weeks and months, gradually establishing trust while providing life-saving cold weather gear and dignity-restorative hygiene supplies. By spring, our outreach team was able to escort Orlando to the Janus Access Center where she was screened and deemed eligible for the full range of Homeless Youth Continuum services. Janus provided an immediate bed in shelter and helped store her belongings so she would feel safe remaining engaged in services. She was connected with Outside In for medical assistance and was provided with an Assertive Engagement mentor who enrolled Orlando in their Job Readiness Training program. Today, Orlando has started two paid internships with KBOO Radio and the kitchen at OI where she gives back to her peers by providing meals at the Day Program.

Our local partners are part of a city/county Homeless Youth Continuum of services which includes Outside In, New Avenues for Youth, the Native American Youth Association and IRCO. PLEASE support this very important bill which directly shows your support for our very important youth throughout Oregon.

Dennis Morrow

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