



House Committee on Rules

June 2, 2025

## **Testimony in Support of House Bill 3970**

Chair Bowman, Vice-Chairs Drazen and Pham, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tyler Mac Innis, Policy Analyst for the Oregon Center for Public Policy, and I respectfully submit this testimony in support of HB 3970 on behalf of the Center. The Oregon Center for Public Policy is a nonpartisan think tank that uses research and analysis to improve the economic outcomes for all Oregonians, especially for those struggling to make ends meet.

Oregon's housing crisis is felt all across our state, but perhaps most acutely by unaccompanied houseless youth. These children and young adults must navigate finding housing in markets where rents are always on the rise, while often juggling school and work to provide for themselves. In 2023, Oregon had the fourth highest number of unaccompanied houseless youth of any state. Nearly 70 percent of Oregon's unaccompanied houseless youth were unsheltered that year, the highest rate of any state.

HB 3970 provides funding support for homeless youth services across Oregon through the Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program (YEHP), 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.

In recent years, YEHP has implemented innovative approaches to addressing youth homelessness using direct cash transfers. YEHP's Direct Cash Transfer Plus ("DCT+") pilot provides consistent financial support to identified youth over a 24-month period, offering the financial footing a parent or guardian would often provide to a young person entering adulthood. YEHP's Direct Cash Transfers as Prevention ("DCT-P") pilot offers one-time payments to youth exiting homelessness to help them with the costs that often occur during that transition, such as a deposit on an apartment. Follow up surveys with youth in the DCT+ pilot have found they are

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more likely to be living in their own homes, more likely to be employed, and less likely to be weighed down by debt. Though these pilots have demonstrated success in their early years, they lack the funding needed to bring them to scale to a point where they adequately meet the needs of unaccompanied houseless youth across our state. HB 3970 will help better understand the needs of unaccompanied houseless youth, and ensure programs like YEHP's DCT+ and DCT-P pilots can be scaled.

All Oregon children and youth deserve the opportunity to enter into adulthood with the stable footing needed to chart their own path. HB 3970 would strengthen the Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program to better enable it to meet the needs of unaccompanied houseless youth in Oregon, and make our state a better place to call home for all children and youth. I urge your support.

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