

June 3, 2025

Chair Bowman, Vice-Chair Drazan, Vice-Chair Pham, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to Oregon's children, youth, and young adults. My name is Sarah Cantor and I am writing on behalf of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon in support of HB 3079 and ensuring a full continuum of services for Oregon's unaccompanied houseless youth and families.

I hope you will join me in affirming housing as a basic human right for all Oregonians. HB 3079 provides funding for homeless youth services in rural Oregon through the Youth Emergency Housing Program. This program provides flexible funding to help prevent family homelessness through things like rent assistance, transportation and legal services. HB 3970 also provides funding to expand or enhance existing shelter facilities, outreach, culturally specific services, behavioral health and substance use services for houseless youth.

As the parent of three teens/young adults, I know firsthand the challenges of growing up these days are quite different from my youth. My kids have struggled with mental health issues and substance abuse issues and have run away to the streets, and that is with a caring and supportive family to return to. I can only imagine the difficulties faced by youth who do not have any trusted adults to rely on for help. I do know the grim statistics they face: unemployment, sexual abuse, incarceration, substance abuse and addiction rates are very high for houseless youth.

In the United States, half of homeless adults first experienced homelessness in their youth. We know that by investing in services for this population that we can and will deter lifetimes of housing instability and homelessness. Every child and young adult deserves to have access to safe and stable support services that help them thrive. HB 3970 ensures that is a reality for our young Oregonians experiencing homelessness. I understand that the budget is grim for the next biennium, but we can either pay now for these supports, or pay for the consequences of their

lack in the future. I for one prefer to give kids the tools to improve their lives now rather than to house them for crimes later.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Sarah Cantor

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