

Honorable Chair Hudson, Vice Chairs Dobson and McIntire, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Nicole Ritterbush, and I am the Housing and Outreach Supervisor at Maslow Project in Jackson and Josephine counties. We serve young children and families, including families who are experiencing homelessness or housing instability. I am writing to support HB 4149 because educational stability starts early, and disruptions in early learning have long-term consequences.

When families lose stable housing, children are stripped of the consistent routines and supportive relationships with educators that they need to thrive. This bill strengthens school stability, offering a vital lifeline during crises.

Throughout my career, I have worked with incredible youth who only reached their goals because of the crucial support provided by McKinney-Vento rights. These rights allow them to access their safe space—school—build resiliency, attend early learning programs, and pursue higher education to become our future community leaders. Early identification and structured support for youth homelessness is a necessary, proactive, upstream approach.

I support this bill because it ensures children stay connected to their education, reduces enrollment barriers, and provides a swift, consistent response for families in crisis. I urge you to support HB 4149 and help Oregon ensure that homelessness does not interrupt a child's education and development.

Sincerely,
Nicole Ritterbush
Housing and Outreach Supervisor
Maslow Project
Jackson and Josephine Counties/Oregon