

**Testimony in Support of HB 4149
Codifying Federal McKinney-Vento Standards in State Law for Homeless Students
February 9th, 2026**

Chair Hudson, Vice-Chairs Dobson and McIntire, and members of the House Education Committee,

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 4149, to codify legislation that ensures Oregon's public education system fully codifies and strengthens the federal McKinney-Vento standards for students experiencing homelessness.

The Oregon Law Center is a non-profit legal services organization dedicated to protecting the rights of low-income Oregonians, including children and youth facing housing instability. Our clients include families and unaccompanied youth whose educational success is jeopardized by barriers created by homelessness and mobility.

Why HB 4149 Matters: Students experiencing homelessness face significant obstacles to school enrollment, consistent attendance, and academic stability. Despite existing federal protections under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, many students in our state encounter delays or disruptions when:

- enrolling in school without required documentation,
- seeking to remain in their school of origin after a housing change,
- accessing transportation to school, or
- navigating disputes over placement or services.

HB 4149 would officially incorporate these essential McKinney-Vento protections into Oregon's education code, clarifying obligations for school districts, expanding student stability, and aligning state law with federal intent.

Key Provisions: The bill advances educational equity by:

1. Requiring school districts and charter schools to adopt policies ensuring immediate enrollment, appropriate placement, and access to educational services for homeless students — regardless of missing records or missed deadlines.
2. Mandating designation of local liaisons charged with identifying homeless students, assisting with enrollment, and coordinating support services, including for unaccompanied youth.
3. Affirming students' right to remain in their school of origin unless a different placement is demonstrably in their best interest, promoting continuity amid housing instability.
4. Requiring transportation support and dispute resolution processes, ensuring barriers to education are resolved promptly and fairly while students remain enrolled.
5. Establishing a state coordinator to oversee implementation and support districts in meeting these responsibilities.



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Impact on Oregon Youth: In the most recent reporting year, over 21,000 Oregon public school students were identified as experiencing homelessness — nearly 4 % of the student population. These students are disproportionately at risk of academic disruption, lower graduation rates, and long-term educational setbacks. Codifying McKinney-Vento standards at the state level will reduce administrative confusion, ensure consistent implementation across districts, and protect vulnerable students' rights to education.

Legal Alignment and Best Practice: Federal law already requires liaison services, immediate enrollment, school-of-origin placement when feasible, and dispute resolution procedures. However, without clear state statutory language, practices vary by district, and enforcement can be inconsistent. This bill provides the statewide clarity necessary to ensure every student experiencing homelessness in Oregon receives the full protections of McKinney-Vento.

Conclusion: For all these reasons, the Oregon Law Center urges the committee to support HB 4149. This bill represents a vital step toward educational equity for students experiencing homelessness, ensuring that housing instability does not determine whether a child can stay in school, participate fully, and succeed.

Thank you for your consideration.