



**4115 N. Mississippi Ave
Portland, OR 97217
www.pdxqcenter.org**

February 6, 2014

Chair Sara Gelser
House Education Committee
H-285 Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: House Bill 4134

Chair Gelser:

I am writing, on behalf of the organization and staff of Q Center, which includes SMYRC (Sexual & Gender Minority Youth Resource Center), in support of House Bill 4134. We see much strength in HB 4134, but also have some concerns about the implementation of the funding if the bill passes.

SMYRC is a 15-year old program serving gay and transgender youth in Oregon. Many of the youth we work with daily experience community and family rejection, escalating their risks and needs, e.g. homelessness, placement in foster care, substance use/dependence, non-completion of education, incredibly high rates of depression and suicidal ideation, survival crime, and consequently, experience in the juvenile justice system. We implement a harm reduction model, meeting youth where they are and striving to intervene, and ultimately, prevent, risky behaviors and needs, that place gay and transgender youth in these systems in which they are invisible.

As a community organization, we seek a combination of public and private funding in order to provide services for these youth as well as advocating for and with them in health and human service systems so that we CAN prevent their entrance into juvenile justice system. That said, we see the benefit of moving resources into a model that allows more flexibility for community organizations to access funding streams that have not been available in the past. Community organizations across Oregon are doing

incredible prevention and intervention work with high-risk youth, but need assistance in scaling up these efforts to reach more youth. Gay and transgender youth are not the only youth who fall in to this category and we certainly are concerned about how health and welfare systems are dealing with children and youth of color, children and youth in poverty, and rural communities.

We want to work to break cycles of crime committed in order to survive, to intervene in long-term homelessness, and to contribute to youth finding success in life by completing basic education through high school graduation or obtaining a GED. We believe HB 4134 contributes more support and funding to work that is responsive to indicators of need, which deters or slows down entrance into the public safety system and help keep kids in school.

While we support the goals of HB 4134, we are concerned about the timeline for the requests for proposals and implementation of programs and services. However, we understand there may be amendments to address this concern. Additionally, we have some concerns about criteria needed for RFPs, in particular requirements for data and its availability. Even in state systems where data is tracked and available for race/ethnicity, poverty levels, and other data points, we see a significant gap in capturing data about gay and transgender young people in Oregon, though we can make some estimates based on the youth we serve at SMYRC each year. We served over 100 homeless gay and transgender youth in 2013 and want desperately to see those numbers drop. We would hope that the restructuring of funds contemplated in HB 4134 would provide for sufficient flexibility to ensure that community organizations who know best how to work with youth at highest risk are able to do so in a variety of ways.

Thank you for your time and efforts on this legislation. We hope adjustments in the bill can be made to support and effectively administer the goals of the Youth Development Council to recognize the expertise provided by a broad array of more community organizations and services.

Sincerely and respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Barbara McCullough-Jones". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "B" and "M".

Barbara McCullough-Jones
Executive Director

CC: Speaker Tina Kotek, Oregon House of Representatives