



Jackson Street Youth Shelter, Inc. • www.jacksonstreet.org • 541-754-2404
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February 2015

Re: Support for HB 2232

To: House Human Services and Housing Committee, Chair Keny-Guyer and Committee members

Jackson Street Youth Shelter, Inc. started in 2001 as a community effort to assist runaway and homeless youth and their families in Benton County. I stepped in as Executive Director in 2004 to help keep a small, struggling organization functioning and financially viable. I know what it's like for a young organization to strive every year to find enough funding to keep essential programs alive. In our case, we have been able to slowly build a broad base of support from private sources; individuals, families, service clubs, and foundations now provide almost half of our funding. But every year we still struggle to find enough funding to pay staff a living wage and respond to the community's need for additional services.

We have recently taken on the challenge of expanding our program to reach more youth in neighboring Linn County, larger than Benton County in both population and land area. Although our Corvallis shelter has always welcomed Linn County Youth, these youth and families really needed a shelter and related services in their own communities. Making this happen is not easy to do, especially in the face of recent economic conditions, but we are now working with numerous Linn County partners and striving to stretch our resources to cover both counties. Our goal is to offer a complete solution to ending youth homelessness in our region, which will involve programs for street outreach, emergency shelter, transitional housing, education support, mentoring, individualized case management, independent living skills workshops, peer support groups, and many other tools and services that have been successful in Benton County.

I get e-mails and calls several times a year from community members in other regions of Oregon saying they have a need for services like ours and asking how we started our program and how we fund it. I believe in helping each group, because their youth

Making a Difference in the Lives of our Youth

need the same chance at a future that we try to give youth in our region. We share our policies and give tours to excited community groups, but I also have to be honest and describe the limited funding available, knowing that this will likely prove to be an insurmountable barrier to many of these programs unless they can raise all the funding from private donors – which is nearly impossible.

Our programs and those of our peers are focused on safety, well-being, permanent connections, and self-sufficiency. Our programs have demonstrated that we can have a positive impact on both short-term and long-term health, education, and economic outcomes. The population we serve needs its own base of public support, separate (although overlapping) with public support for young children and families. Adolescence is a crucial time of life, and a small amount spent to help a youth find the right path to a productive future is an investment that will yield life-long benefits.

As a member of the Oregon Alliance of Children’s Programs, I’ve worked with and been inspired by my peers. **There is a wealth of knowledge, experience, and innovation that I would like to see employed and enhanced so that we can truly have a statewide system of services and support for youth. I believe DHS is a key element in bringing this about, and must help lead development of a comprehensive and coordinated approach for services and support for runaway and homeless youth in Oregon.**

Oregon’s adolescent youth are not a lost cause – they are our future, and they deserve our support.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify for you today.

Sincerely,

Ann P. Craig, Executive Director
Jackson Street Youth Shelter, Inc.

Cc: Oregon Alliance of Children’s Programs.