



Jackson Street Youth Shelter, Inc. • www.jacksonstreet.org • 541-754-2404
PO Box 1984 Albany, OR 97321 • PO Box 285 Corvallis, OR 97339

April 23, 2015

Re: Support for HB 2232A-Engrossed

To: Senate Human Services and Early Childhood Committee: Chair Gelser 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 and now serves Benton and Linn Counties with street outreach, case management, mentoring, support groups, emergency shelter, and transitional living housing specific for this population.

According to the National Network for Youth report, *What Works To End Youth Homelessness*, the factors impacting youth homelessness are complex and differ from those impacting other homeless populations. Youth homelessness is unique because young people are physically, emotionally, psychologically, and socially still developing — they are adults-in-progress with unique strengths and assets. They often enter into homelessness without life skills, such as cooking, money management, housekeeping, and job searching.

To move forward and scale up a youth-appropriate service delivery system, we must strategically invest resources so young people have access to the support they need to grow and develop as adolescents and transition to adulthood. Oregon has a network of programs for these youth, but they are currently insufficient for the level of need. With a full service delivery system, we would have the ability to provide the readily accessible care, safety, and services necessary for youth in crisis, and truly prevent and end youth homelessness.

Community-based organizations like ours are focusing on evidence-informed interventions that achieve appropriate family reunification, housing stability, and improvements in youth health and functioning. Collaboration between public systems (child welfare, juvenile justice, and public school systems) and community-based organizations is effective in leveraging the resources and strengths of what each has to offer. 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.

Making a Difference in the Lives of our Youth

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. Let's work together.

We are proud to have our region Senator as Chair of this committee. Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify for you today.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ann P. Craig". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping "y" at the end of the last name.

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

Cc: Oregon Alliance of Children's Programs.