



OREGON  
*Alliance*  
of Children's Programs

## **HB 2232 – RUNAWAY & HOMELESS YOUTH (RHY) SYSTEM REQUIRE DHS TO HAVE AN ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Senate Human Services & Early Childhood Committee Hearing  
23 April 2015

Dear Chair Gelser and Committee Members,

I am Janet Arenz, Executive Director of the Oregon Alliance of Children's Programs. We are a statewide nonprofit organization representing 45 providers, who deliver \$223 million in services to over 100,000 children each year. Additionally, these providers employ 5500 individuals, with \$152 million in annual payroll.

Among our members are 10 runaway and homeless providers from around the state.

- Please see the sheet attached with all of their logos and areas.

### **WHERE ARE THESE CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

We connected each of you with the number of homeless children and unaccompanied minors in your legislative districts.

- Please see the attached sheet for your count.

We know from other data sources that, for a truer number of unaccompanied minors, you need to double the count in school to include those who are not attending school.

Unaccompanied minors were the intended priority focus of the runaway and homeless system when it was established.

Unaccompanied minors are:

- most likely to become victims of crime
- most likely to be sex trafficked
- most likely to reunify with families when it is safe and when services are offered

### **WHAT ARE THEIR ISSUES**

- 59% of these youth have suffered significant trauma, per a 2014 Alliance conducted a study using the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study model.
- ACE is a study of 10 childhood events. A score of 4 or more of 10 events create behavioral, health and learning difficulties.

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- Without intervention and services, the Center for Disease Control identifies these children and youth as headed into a pipeline of social ills and chronic physical health deterioration.
- Science identifies the brain as “freezing” in development and learning, when trauma is unaddressed. Half of unaccompanied minors are chronically absent from school and those who attend will have difficulty graduating high school.
- Oregon spends an estimated \$900 million on 8,000 (on any given day) children in foster care.
- Oregon spends \$1.8 million for the nearly 19,000 homeless children and youth, with an estimated 6,000 of them unaccompanied youth.

## THE PAST

Since 1998, the Alliance has devoted itself to this population and to the people who are struggling to serve them.

- We have introduced 5 pieces of legislation to help establish recognition of this population and build a system for them.
- We brought together 3 different groups to achieve specific goals, conducted 3 studies, and made the only funding asks for this population to the governor and legislature.

## THE PRESENT

In the last four years (since DHS gained responsibility for RHY)

- Our members have established data demonstrating outcomes, have assessed community needs, determined where funding should be focused, and identified what the funding would purchase.
- DHS has made individual contact with providers, has linked training opportunities for providers, did conduct a survey monkey to ask their opinions, and held one meeting where all of the providers could be face-to-face. Yet none of this work has resulted in the most important goal: ***to build a strategic plan for the establishment of a sustainable statewide system for these children and youth***, which the legislature mandated they do in 2011.

## THE FUTURE: OUR REQUEST

We want to work in a public/private partnership, face-to-face, with people who can build a comprehensive, coordinated system to reduce the number of homeless children and help the ones who need us.

- **Require establishment an advisory committee** for the purpose of joint collaboration between providers, the DHS and other public systems to implement the 2011 legislation.
- **Require the advisory committee to report back to the legislature** on their progress, final system plan and recommendations.

Please don't hesitate to be in contact with me if I can answer any questions.

THANK YOU

Janet Arenz

