



Jackson Street Youth Services

PO Box 285

Corvallis, OR 97339-0285

March 21, 2017

Re: SB 5526, Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Human Services

Dear Senator Steiner-Hayward, Representative Rayfield, and Committee members:

Jackson Street Youth Services is a nonprofit organization that serves homeless and at-risk youth, ages 10 to 24, in Linn, Benton, and Lincoln counties. Jackson Street is here to promote safety, stability, and well-being for youth. **We work to prevent homelessness by showing a path to long-term success through building positive relationships and teaching skills for self-sufficiency.** Our programs include street outreach, emergency shelter, and transitional housing, as well as activities intended to prevent homelessness, such as mentoring, support groups in schools, and independent living skills classes.

If Oregonians truly want to end abuse and trafficking of children and youth, we must end child and youth homelessness. As long as kids are desperate for shelter and other basic needs, they will be vulnerable. Unfortunately there are homeless youth all across the state of Oregon, but Oregon's RHY (Runaway and Homeless Youth) funds help few of them beyond the Portland metro area. Only two secondary metro areas are covered by these funds and **no** rural areas. Current RHY funding levels must be viewed as **only a first step** in building a state-wide system that will ensure that we are addressing the needs of **all** RHY youth throughout Oregon.

Prevention is also important. Here, briefly, is a case in point: Nala was wandering the streets at night. Her teachers and parents sought help from Jackson Street to build skills with Nala that would keep her safe and prevent her from further trauma. Jackson Street helped her find mental health counseling and matched her with a mentor. Nala is just one of the many youth we have been able to support because of a small Mentoring grant from DHS.

However, we currently receive **no** Oregon RHY funds, and struggle to find the resources necessary to meet the needs of homeless and at-risk youth in our three-county area. **Our emergency shelters in Albany and Corvallis need RHY funding to sustain our record of successful outcomes.** And the work we do, assisting both youth and families, **does** make a difference in many young lives:

- Youth often access our shelter because of conflict at home, abuse, or homelessness. After benefiting from the services we provide, 91% of those youth are reunified with their families or are helped to find another safe place to live when they leave our shelters.

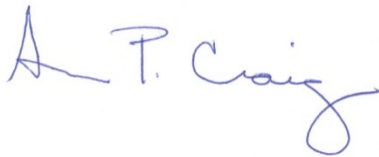
Making a Difference in the Lives of Our Youth, 24/7/365

- 100% of youth who enter emergency shelter are engaged with school by the time they exit to a more stable living situation.
- Aftercare services keep us in touch with vulnerable youth, so they always have someone available to help them keep their lives on track.

The youth we serve are at a great disadvantage. Without our programs, they will become more likely to be victimized. And **we** are at a disadvantage, because Oregon's RHY funding program leaves out organizations like ours that serve small-town and rural youth.

Please maintain – and if possible, increase – these critical funds for programs that are efficiently and effectively helping vulnerable youth find a path to success.

Sincerely,



Ann P. Craig
Executive Director