



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 3rd, 2020

Dear President Courtney and Speaker Kotek, and Emergency Board Committee Members,

I humbly request that you consider funding \$1,000,000 to award one-year grants to organizations that provide services to unaccompanied homeless youth. Additionally, I request \$1,200,000 to award one-year grants to organizations that operate host home projects for unaccompanied homeless youth. These appropriations are to be a one-time funding.

These vulnerable underserved children do not have parents, homes, or resources. Currently, Oregon is funding resources for these children at approximately \$0.93 a day per child. The resources they have access to are bleak. For example, in Salem there are approximately 600 homeless unaccompanied youth served by a 10 bed shelter and a drop-in center that has 2 case workers.

As you consider how to allocate emergency funding in the context of the coronavirus COVID-19, I would ask that you consider these vulnerable youth and the severely inadequate services they currently receive. There is virtually no way to address this added health risk under the current funding structure.

Below you will find language with definitions and structure of how the money would be allocated:

Unaccompanied homeless youth services enhancement grant program.

(1) As used in this section, "unaccompanied homeless youth" means a person who is at least 14 years of age but not more than 24 years of age, who is not in the physical custody of a parent or legal guardian and who is homeless.

(2) In addition to any other scholarships or grants, the Department of Human Services may award one-year grants to organizations that provide services to unaccompanied homeless youth.

(3) An organization is eligible to apply for a grant under this section if the organization has an existing grant with the department to provide services to unaccompanied homeless youth.

(4) Grants awarded under this section may be used:

(a) To increase the accessibility of the following programs and services to unaccompanied homeless youth:

(A) Shelter facilities; (B) Outreach; (C) Culturally specific services; (D) Mental health or substance abuse services; housing options; and (E) Increased awareness and prevention strategies in regards to the COVID-19 coronavirus..

(5) The department may adopt rules to administer the grant program described in this section.

SECTION X. Host home projects.

(1) As used in this section:

(a) "Host home project" means a project that facilitates an arrangement under which an unaccompanied homeless youth resides in the home of a private individual, pursuant to the terms of a contract between the private individual and the youth, for free or at below-market rent.

(b) "Long-term host home project" means a host home project run by an organization that has a memorandum of understanding or a letter of agreement with one or more school districts and in which



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unaccompanied homeless youth participants, on average during the most recent two years, resided in host homes for a minimum of 180 days, as reported by the relevant school district.

(c) "Short-term host home project" means a host home project in which unaccompanied homeless youth participants, on average during the most recent two years, resided in host homes for a maximum of 180 days, as reported by the relevant school district.

(d) "Unaccompanied homeless youth" means a person who is: (A) At least 16 years of age but not more than 21 years of age; (B) Not in the physical custody of a parent or legal guardian; (C) Not in the custody of the Department of Human Services; (D) Not a ward of the state; and (E) Homeless.

(2) In addition to and not in lieu of any other scholarships or grants, the department may award one-year grants to organizations that operate host home projects for unaccompanied homeless youth.

organization operated a host home project on January 1, 2020, and can demonstrate the ability to:

(a) Expand host home projects in communities in which the organization provides services;

(b) Establish new long-term host home projects in communities that do not have long term host home projects; or

(c) Establish new short-term host home projects.

(4) Recipients of grants awarded under this section shall work to achieve the following outcomes for unaccompanied homeless youth:

(a) Improved school attendance.

(b) Participation in formal or informal mentoring.

(c) Increased access to nutrition, health care, mental trauma-informed support and transportation services.

(3) An organization is eligible to apply for a grant under this section if the

(5) A recipient of a grant awarded under this section shall ensure all individuals of 18 years of age or older residing in the host home who are not the unaccompanied homeless youth have an approved background check under ORS 181A.200 and 409.027.

(6) A host home is not a child-caring agency as defined in ORS 418.205.

(7) The department may adopt rules to administer the grant program described in this funding request.

"A society is judged by how it treats and shows compassion for those who cannot protect or fend for themselves" -Mohandas Gandhi

I urge you to help fund our homeless unaccompanied youth through the emergency board.

Sincerely,

Cheri Helt
State Representative
House District 54