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New Avenues for Youth
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ILP Testimony HB4120

2/2/20

New Avenues for Youth

Chair Keny-Guyer, Vice Chair Noble, Vice Chair Williams, Members of the Committee

My name is Sean Suib, I'm the Executive Director of New Avenues for Youth, and New Avenues operates throughout Multnomah County.

Over the past 20 years New Avenues has been one of the lead providers of homeless youth services in the Portland Metro area. I personally have been working with homeless youth in Portland for nearly 30 years. Sadly, I can say from direct experience, that nearly every single day a new young person shows up at our doors seeking safety off the streets.

10 years ago New Avenues went upstream searching for information about why young people keep falling into homelessness. I don't think it will surprise anyone here to learn that we found a direct and undeniable relationship between living in foster care and youth homelessness.

In fact, some studies that show as many as 50% of youth aging out of foster find themselves homeless within just a few years. And locally, our State data just showed, youth who do not participate in ILP services are almost 3 times as likely to have been homeless in the past 2 years.

This really isn't a surprise considering the average age of financial independence in this Country is creeping over 28 years old. That number accounts for all young people, many of whom have family support, resources, social capital, and practiced skills.

For the past 6 years New Avenues has served as the largest provider of ILP services in the State, and what I can tell you is that ILP is often the thing that stands between young people being supported and prepared or them sadly falling through the cracks. The relationships the ILP coaches provide, the skills they teach, and the resources they help navigate, is truly what makes the difference.

NEW AVENUES for Youth

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All that said, I am here today because our current ILP system is in trouble. We are only serving half the eligible youth in the State, And, ILP is so poorly resourced that we are starting to lose providers who can no longer afford to run at deficits to operate these critical services. This is especially true of providers in rural communities. Despite tremendous fund raising efforts, we are all having to make tough choices.

Reducing ILP service means reducing safe adult relationships that support youth transitioning from care. No fault of their own, young people aging out of foster care deserve a fairer start!

With limited resources, we know we have to make sure dollars are going toward effective programs and if ILP were resourced properly we could certainly do more. The provider community in fact has done the work. We embedded a researcher from the Regional Research Institute in our ILP's and developed a tiered service model, which is based on one of the few research validated ILP approaches recognized nationally- "My Life". That model if fully funded and implemented would move us away from a thin soup approach and make sure there is enough for those that need it most.

Unfortunately SB745 did not make it through the legislature last year. That said, we need to act now, with urgency to stabilize the ILP system with HB 4120.

Once stable, we can continue to work with the legislature to right size these services and make sure that those that need it, get it, and that homelessness is no longer an outcome for Oregon's foster youth.

Thank you!



Sean Suib

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