



HOUSING ALLIANCE

February 22, 2021

House Committee on Human Services
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Williams, Vice Chair Leif, Vice Chair Ruiz, Members of the Committee:

I am writing to you today on behalf of the Oregon Housing Alliance to express our support for HB 2544, which would authorize grants to organizations that provide services to unaccompanied homeless youth.

The Oregon Housing Alliance is a coalition of more than ninety organizations from all parts of the state. Our members have come together with the knowledge that housing opportunity is the foundation on which all of our success is built – individual success as students, parents, workers, and community members as well as the success of our communities. We represent a diverse set of voices including affordable housing developers, residents of affordable housing, local jurisdictions, and organizations working to meet basic needs in every corner of our state.

We believe that all Oregonians need a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, we knew that already, too many seniors, families, and people who experience disabilities were paying too much of their income towards rent, and were experiencing other forms of housing instability. Today, we know that too many young Oregonians are experiencing housing instability, and for children who are in the foster care system, the transition to adulthood can be difficult. Many foster youth face barriers to renting their own apartment after transitioning out of care, including the increasing cost of housing across our state. In addition, youth face several specific barriers including a lack of rental history, and no one to co-sign for their first lease to build that history. They may also need support to learn the life skills necessary to live independently.

The figures detailing the rate of unaccompanied homeless youth in the State of Oregon are the bleakest in the entire country. With the highest rate of youth houselessness in the country, Oregon saw roughly 3,700 unaccompanied houseless K-12 youth in the 2018-19 school year. Of those homeless youth, 51% were youth of color, up to 40% identified as LGBTQIA+, up to 60% experienced some form of abuse in one of their former homes. Nationally, Black students are 2.67 times¹ more likely to experience homelessness as their white counterparts.

The effects of the last recession foreshadow what is likely to come as a result of the economic fallout from the Covid-19 pandemic. During the Great Recession, the State of Oregon saw a 32% rise in homeless youth, undoubtedly caused by increased financial distress among families, as well as a rise in violence and abuse within a family.

¹ <https://www.nn4youth.org/wp-content/uploads/YOC-HCYA.pdf>

HB 2544 would work to address the high rates of youth homelessness in Oregon by creating an “unaccompanied homeless youth services enhancement grant program.” This program would disburse \$2 million in two-year grants to organizations that provide services to unaccompanied homeless youth, and \$2.4 million to host-home projects. Grants made under HB 2544 would go to organizations that have a track record of providing assistance to unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness, including shelter facilities, mental health clinics, and culturally specific and culturally relevant organizations.

Organizations across Oregon stand ready to assist youth in transitioning to adulthood and accessing career and educational opportunities, finding safety, and receiving the support they need, but not without your help. We urge you to support HB 2544, and secure critical funding for Oregon’s youth.

Sincerely,

Loren Naldoza
On Behalf of the Oregon Housing Alliance

Housing Alliance Members

1000 Friends of Oregon
211info
Aging in the Gorge
Benton Habitat for Humanity
Bienestar
Bradley Angle
BRIDGE Housing
Business for a Better Portland
CASA of Oregon
Central City Concern
Chrisman Development
Church Women United of Lane County
City of Beaverton
City of Eugene
City of Forest Grove
City of Hillsboro
City of Hood River
City of Portland
City of Tigard
Clackamas County
Coalition of Community Health Clinics
Coalition of Housing Advocates
College Housing Northwest
Community Action Partnership of Oregon
Community Action Team
Community Alliance of Tenants
Community Development Partners
Community Housing Fund
Community Partners for Affordable Housing
Community Vision
Cornerstone Community Housing
DevNW
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
Enterprise Community Partners
Fair Housing Council of Oregon
Farmworker Housing Development Corp.
FOOD for Lane County
Habitat for Humanity of Oregon
Habitat for Humanity Portland/Metro East
Hacienda CDC
Home Forward
Homes for Good
Housing Authorities of Oregon
Housing Authority of Clackamas County
Housing Development Center
Housing Oregon
Human Solutions
Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization
Impact Northwest
Innovative Housing, Inc.
Interfaith Alliance on Poverty
JOIN
Lane County Health and Human Services
League of Oregon Cities
League of Women Voters of Oregon
Lincoln County
Looking Glass Community Services
Mainstream Housing Inc.
Metro
Mid-Columbia Housing Authority
NAYA Family Center
Neighborhood Partnerships
NeighborImpact
NeighborWorks Umpqua
Network for Oregon Affordable Housing
Northwest Housing Alternatives
Northwest Pilot Project
Oregon AFSCME Council 75
Oregon Coalition of Christian Voices
Oregon Center for Public Policy
Oregon Coalition on Housing & Homelessness
Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities
Oregon Food Bank
Our Children Oregon
Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon
Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives
Portland Homeless Family Solutions
Proud Ground
Raphael House
REACH CDC
Residents Organizing for Change (ROC Oregon)
Rogue Action Center
Rose CDC
St. Francis Shelter
St. Vincent de Paul of Lane County, Inc.
ShelterCare
Sisters Habitat for Humanity
Sponsors, Inc.
SquareOne Villages
Street Roots
Think Real Estate
Transition Projects
Washington County
Welcome Home Coalition

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