

24 February 2021

Dear Chair Williams, Vice-Chairs Leif and Ruiz, and Members of the House Human Services Committee:

My name is Susan Van Liew, I am the assistant superintendent of Lincoln County School District. I am writing in strong support of HB 2544. On behalf of Lincoln County School District, I would like to emphasize that Lincoln County is experiencing a gap in services for homeless youth in Lincoln County. Lincoln County School District is in support of creating a robust continuum of services for homeless youth. Compared to other counties, Lincoln County has the highest per capita rate of students in homeless living situations across Oregon. (<https://ourchildrenoregon.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/county-data-book-2020-final-web.pdf>) In the 2019-2020 school year, 999 children were identified as homeless by the district, 110 of whom were unaccompanied students living in homeless situations without the supervision of their parent or guardian.

The current gap in services in Lincoln County is for providing host homes for students who cannot gain permission from a parent or guardian to be active host home participants. Long term host home providers across Oregon bring essential expertise and experience placing and supporting students in host homes across Oregon. Here in Lincoln County, a host home program was previously active in and had to pause services due to lack of funding. At the time the program was paused, there were at least 10 students who needed and were interested in host home housing.

Lincoln County School District strongly urges passage of HB 2544 to provide funding for enhancements that can be made in Lincoln County to support services in Lincoln County and expand youth housing options in coordination with local agency partners. We are thankful for the legislature's commitment to Oregon's unaccompanied houseless youth and hope to see this bill signed into law this session. Again, as a county with one of the highest rates of youth homelessness in the state, we hope that funding will find its way to supporting host home models in Lincoln County.

Thank you for your service and dedication to Oregon's unaccompanied houseless youth, and for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Susan Van Liew

Assistant Superintendent, Lincoln County School District