



February 1, 2022

To: Chair Williams, Vice Chairs Ruiz and Scharf, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the American Association of University Women of Oregon (AAUW of OR), we express our strong support for House Bill 4013.

Oregon's record of supporting homeless youth is abysmal. Oregon has the highest rate of youth homelessness in the United States, and Black and LGBTQIA+ youth are particularly impacted by the ever-increasing problem. It is also short sighted. Failing to provide adequate support now means significantly greater costs for the State in the long run and, more importantly, it means homeless youth become homeless adults who are often ill prepared to meet the many challenges that life presents.

Unfortunately, programs designed to provide tuition and homeless assistance are not uniformly distributed throughout Oregon. This isn't right and it isn't fair. It is an example of why we find ourselves in the midst of attempting to navigate the political, social and cultural divide that currently plagues our country. Expanding eligibility for these supports is sorely needed.

Expanding tuition and fee waivers that are currently available to former foster youth is also a step in the right direction. We applaud any efforts that current or former homeless youth undertake to obtain an education. We also recognize the courage and effort these youth demonstrate by embarking on this course.

We believe that one of the most important features of this bill is the proposal for the Department of Human Services and the Housing and Community Services Department to collaborate in preparing a report that includes recommendations for legislation that will reduce the number of youth experiencing homelessness by at least 25% over a five-year period. This proposal represents a worthy and desperately needed effort to take a long-term view of this problem, and rather than pecking at the edges of appropriate levels funding, to actually address reduction in the numbers of Oregon's homeless youth. There is no time to waste.

We urge the passage of House Bill 4013.

Respectfully Submitted,

Trish Garner

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