

Testimony to House Human Services Committee

Re. HB4013

Tuesday, February 1, 2022

1:00pm

Jennifer Steinbrenner Hale

Hello Chair Williams, Vice-Chairs Ruiz and Scharf, and Members of the Committee.

For the record, my name is Jenny Hale and I am the director of Second Home, a host home program of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon. Thank you so much for this opportunity to speak to you today.

We are extremely humbled and honored to have walked with and learned from Savina over the years. Not only has she worked hard to build a fulfilling life for herself, she has continued to work hard to ensure that other youth also have what they need to build a meaningful life.

Second Home provides long-term, stable housing for unaccompanied youth, so that they can focus on their studies, explore their gifts and talents, graduate from high school, and go on to pursue their goals and dreams for their future.

Each person needs the opportunity to pursue their goals and dreams for the future.

At the moment, there is a gap in housing availability for unaccompanied young people coming out of high school and stepping into their next season of life. For many youth, their family provides for them in this transitional time. For unaccompanied students, their options are limited.

SH provides continuity during this critical transition by maintaining housing for students after high school, if they choose to stay with the program. For example, we had a student living with a Second Home provider from his junior year through high school graduation. He then moved to a new host home for an additional two and half years, while attending PCC. This gave him a chance to do well in college from a stable and affordable home base and then go on to PSU, where he now lives in the dorms.

Unaccompanied students graduating from high school have worked hard to overcome a plethora of hurdles! Their hard work and success is in jeopardy if they don't have a bridge to their next season. Housing and healthy relationships are crucial to that bridge structure.

As partners: government, nonprofits, for-profits, individuals, really anyone who wants to be a part of seeing young people be successful, we have what it takes to build and maintain the transitional bridge for and with unaccompanied youth in our midst, to ensure they have the opportunity to live well, pursue their potential, and participate fully in their Oregon communities.

Thank you for your time.

