



Submitter: Ramon A. Hernandez

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure: HB2456

Chair Dexter, Co-Vice Chair Gamba, Co-Vice Chair Helfrich, and
Members of the Committee,

I want to thank you for all you do in communities across Oregon helping children, youth, and young adults. As the Community Engagement Officer of (MWVCAA) Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency, I am committed to serving young communities by advocating for Home Youth Services which aid in providing an array of housing and support initiatives for homeless youth in Marion and Polk County. I write to you today fully supporting HB 2454 and HB 2456, which will provide funds to continue Oregon's mission in addressing the youth experiencing homelessness problem.

I hope that the committee will join me and countless others in affirming that housing is a basic human right for all Oregonians, especially our youth. Oregon HB 2454 and HB 2456 provide \$6.25 M to support host home providers across Oregon. Host homes provide vulnerable youth with long-term housing support as well as a stable home, mentorship, and support system while they attend school. HB 2454 and HB 2456 also provide \$12.5 M to expand or enhance existing shelter facilities, outreach, culturally specific services, mental health/substance use services, and other transitional housing options for houseless youth. These bills will also dedicate funding to providing assistance to school-aged youth and families to prevent evictions or rapidly rehouse them if they do become houseless.

Our Home Youth Services program originated in 1994, addressing a need for helping unsheltered youth who for a variety of housing, family, exploitation, and substance abuse problems found themselves living on the streets. At MWVCAA we continue to see that the need is growing even greater each year with roughly 1200 youth being homeless just in the Salem-Keizer area alone. It is vital that we continue to discuss and devote time and resources to providing safe and stable housing, school support for youth, and mental health options for young communities all across the state. The passage of HB 2454 and HB 2456 will be directly influential in providing opportunities for every vulnerable child and young adult in the state of Oregon experiencing houselessness.

Thank you for the time and consideration.

Ramon A, Hernandez