



January 31, 2023

To: House Housing and Homelessness Committee
From: Our Children Oregon, The Children's Agenda
RE: Support of HB 2454 & HB 2456

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

Our Children Oregon (OCO) is a statewide organization that advances equitable policies, data and research, and whole-child advocacy. The Children's Agenda, convened by OCO, brings together ~127 organizations statewide to create a holistic legislative agenda dedicated to improving the well-being of Oregon's children, youth, and families. Our collective created a 2023 legislative agenda that focuses on community-driven solutions to provide access and opportunities for all children and families.

A safe and stable place to call home is a basic human need. Every Oregonian should have access to a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home. However, Oregon already has one of the highest student homelessness rates in the country. Over 21,000 Oregon students experienced homelessness during the 2019-2020 school year.¹ The prevalence of homelessness is higher among youths who have experienced foster care, LGBTQ+ youths, and youths of color, especially Black, Latinx, and Native American youths.² These students' circumstances put them at an incredible disadvantage through no fault of their own. They are unable to adequately study, adequately learn, and wholly engage in their education. They are 27% less likely to graduate from high school than housed students.

Stable homes are essential for the development, growth, and health of children and youth. **Displacement and housing instability can cause lifelong and multigenerational consequences.**³ Last year, investing and expanding services for houseless youth was part of the 2022 Children's Agenda, and we are returning in 2023 by supporting HB 2454 and HB 2456. HB 2454 and HB 2456 will:

- Fund \$6.25 million to support host home providers across Oregon, who provide youth with a stable home, mentorship, and a support system while attending school.

¹ <https://ourchildrenoregon.org/publications/oregon-kids-count/>

² https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/health-of-women-and-children/measure/homeless_students/state/OR

³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7922232/>

- Fund \$12.5 million to expand and support existing shelter facilities, outreach, culturally-specific services, mental health/substance use services, and other wrap-around services and options for houseless youth.
- Dedicate funding to provide assistance to school-aged youth and families to prevent eviction and rapidly rehouse them.

We thank you for your time and efforts to improve child well-being across the state. We urge your support of HB 2454 and 2456 to expand services for houseless children and youth by investing and expanding culturally-specific services, wrap-around services, and homelessness prevention measures to ensure stable homes for Oregon's children and their families.

From the Our Children Oregon Team,

Ivy Major-McDowall, Policy and Advocacy Director

Jenifer Wagley, Executive Director

View the 2023 Children's Agenda at www.ourchildrenoregon.org/2023-childrens-agenda