



January 2023

*To Address*

*Co-Chair Steiner and Co-Chair Sanchez, and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
Co-Chair Sollman and Co-Chair Evans and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
Subcommittee on Public Safety*

## **Re: Survivor housing funding (SHF)**

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the African Youth & Community Organization (AYCO), it is my pleasure to submit this request for support for our Dream Center Capital Campaign.

AYCO is a culturally-specific 501(c)3 organization led by and for the East African immigrant and refugee community in Portland, Oregon. Our mission is to settle the past, engage the present, and hope for the future. We envision a future where a strong cultural identity within immigrant communities of the Pan-African diaspora creates a thriving, resilient, and self-determining community here in Oregon.

AYCO was founded in 2009 by Executive Director Jamal Dar based on his experience of displacement and desire to re-engage and support youth struggling in the U.S. education system. From our humble beginnings in volunteer-led youth mentorship, over the last thirteen years AYCO has grown to become a multifaceted agency providing comprehensive youth, family, and community support and has enriched the lives of over 30,000 immigrants and refugees. We advocate for our community and work hard to eliminate barriers to educational, professional, and personal growth.

All of our programming has been developed in response to the needs of our community and to improve their social determinants of health. Our community is one of the furthest from education, health, employment, and housing justice due to language barriers, poverty, lack of access to technology, race and religion discrimination, and difficulty transitioning to life in the United States. 99% percent of our constituents are low income. Due to immigration policies that prioritize resettling families that have one or more children with a disability, there is a disproportionate number of youth in our community who have a visible and/or invisible disability. Currently, the East African population is growing rapidly in Multnomah County, with 1 in 5 Black youth identifying as a Somali/East African immigrant/refugee.

With the pandemic, economic crisis, racial justice uprisings, etc. of recent years, we have seen a huge surge in community members coming to our organization for assistance. Many of our community members especially single mothers and youth are having huge issues when it comes housing education, homelessness and many are survivors. The other challenges they face is they have larger families and with the respected cultures it's extremely hard for them to report any crimes or domestic violence issues. It's a shameful to their families and sociality. AYCO has strong standing not only educating them but also providing support. When we learned the survivor housing funding (SHF) from our partner DOJ we are extremely grateful for this opportunity and quickly applied. We are fortunate to receive \$20,000 but we are running our as we have clients in hotels and apartment.

Some of our client said **If there weren't AYCO's SHF support I could see myself dies although I have lost my son and other in in prison, I wouldn't know what to do with myself. Another young lady said my**



husband brought me in the state and he start abusing me, when I reach out to his family since I don't have a family here, they treat me to send me back if I don't do what they said. If I knew a way to return to Africa I would do know. With the help of AYCO crime victim support and SHF I'm extremely happy have a job and a house. Thank you,

With your support and providing survivor housing funding (SHF) grant we can safe many life's specially those who don't have a voice and education.

Thank you for supporting the African Youth and Community Organization (AYCO). Together, we are nurturing and building a thriving, resilient, and self-determining community.

If you would like to learn more about AYCO, our project, and what we do, please feel free to contact me by phone at 503-475-8802 or via email: [jamal@aycoworld.org](mailto:jamal@aycoworld.org).

Thank you again for dreaming with us!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jamal Dar', is written over a thin horizontal line.

Jamal Dar  
Executive Director

*AYCO is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization. Our Federal Tax ID Number is 27-2581852.*