



March 2, 2023

TO: Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development
FROM: Our Children Oregon
RE: Support for HB 5511, OHCS Budget

Dear Co-Chair Woods, Co-Chair Gomberg, and Members of the Committee,

Our Children Oregon's (OCO) mission is advancing equitable policymaking and whole-child advocacy statewide to ensure our children and youth—regardless of their race, identity, ability, or where they live— have what they need to thrive. We collect, analyze, and elevate data and research that, alongside lived experience, drives conversations in support of Oregon's future. **We strongly support Senate Bill 5511 to provide critical funding to the Oregon Housing and Community Services** to prevent homelessness, rehouse people experiencing homelessness, and build and preserve more affordable housing units statewide. Specifically, we support the investment of \$100 million in POP #90 for homelessness prevention funding.

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, over 18,000 Oregon renters have had evictions filed against them in 2022.¹ Eviction, displacement, and homelessness cause major disruptions for tenants, particularly for young children and youths which affect their schooling and educational outcomes. Additionally, 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.² The prevalence of homelessness is higher among youths who experienced foster care, LGBTQ+ youths, and youths of color, especially Black, Latinx, and Indigenous youths.³ 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. The risk of eviction and housing instability can cause lifelong and multigenerational consequences.⁴ For these reasons, we strongly urge your support for \$100 million in funding for emergency rent assistance and eviction prevention to community action agencies and culturally

¹ <https://www.evictedinoregon.com/numbers-at-a-glance>

² <https://ourchildrenoregon.org/publications/oregon-kids-count/>

³ https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/health-of-women-and-children/measure/homeless_students/state/OR

⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7922232/>

specific programs across the state, which is an essential element of homelessness prevention.

Rental assistance keeps people housed, keeps families stable, keeps children in the classroom, and prevents homelessness. This is a smart investment today that will avoid higher human, financial, and societal costs later. We appreciate the efforts and commitment of Oregon leaders to increase the housing supply and rehousing our homeless neighbors, but we must also ensure that the people who are housed today don't end up on the streets themselves. We thank you for your time and efforts to improve child well-being across the state. We urge your support of HB 5511 and POP #90 to prevent homelessness, ensuring stable homes for Oregon's children and 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