



February 24, 2021

Chair Fahey, Vice-Chair's Campos and Morgan, and Members of the Committee:

I'm writing on behalf of the Oregon Alliance's forty members in support HB2163 and urge you support an amendment that would connect long-term rental assistance with a continuum of support services.

The Oregon Alliance is a non-profit dedicated to championing and advocating for the health and well-being of children, youth and families and communities across Oregon in schools, at home, in residential settings and within the community. In 2019 – 2020, our members provided outreach services, transitional living, food, education, employment support, and shelter to over 5,500 homeless youth.

Oregon has consistently ranked 1st as having the highest number of homeless youth compared to other states. The COVID-19 pandemic has only made this crisis more dire. It has hurt the youth job market particularly hard, caused schools to be held online, keeping students far more isolated than usual, and caused severe stress among this population. Some youth don't have any supports that are normally taken for granted such as family, friends or trusted adults.

What we know about homeless youth:

- Homelessness disproportionately impacts youth who are LGBTQIA+ and youth of color.
 - Up to 40% are LGBTQIA+ and 51% identify as a youth of color.
- Youth homelessness is the number one predictor of adult chronic homelessness.
- 40 - 60% have been physically abused at home.
- 20 - 40% have been sexually abused at home.
- As many as ¼ of homeless youth live with a chronic medical condition.

An amendment to HB2163 focused on homeless youth would ensure a strong connection to a comprehensive, well-funded system of care. We cannot eliminate adult chronic homelessness without addressing youth homelessness. This strategy will also save Oregon money since the average cost of a chronically homeless adult to the system is over \$3M during their lifetime.

Housing stability is crucial so youth can then focus on safety, education, and employment. Thank you for considering an amendment connecting rental assistance and additional services to a youth's individual needs in order to truly reduce homelessness in Oregon.

Sincerely,

Royce Bowlin