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To: House Committee on Human Services  
From: Richard Donovan, Legislative Services Specialist  
Re: House Bill 2544  
Date: February 24, 2021

Chair Williams, Vice-Chairs Leif and Ruiz, and members of the committee:

On behalf of OSBA membership, including 197 school districts and 19 Education Service Districts, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 2544.

In 2018, OSBA published a new article titled “Second Home give homeless students stability, second chance to graduate.” The article, which has been included with this testimony, details a challenge that many Oregon students face all too frequently, namely the challenge of experiencing homelessness. The article also highlights Second Home, a program designed to help these students, directing them to a place to stay at a critical time in their respective lives.

Unfortunately, thousands of students in Oregon continue to experience homelessness today. And these students often come from traditionally underserved subgroups of students, including students of color and students experiencing poverty. These types of students were specifically targeted in the Student Success Act, and school districts were directed therein to “Increase academic achievement for students, including reducing academic disparities for... Students who are homeless.” HB 3427 (2019), sec. 9(2)(b)-(f).

School districts often seek to help homeless students. And for many these students, school itself is a refuge from the challenges that housing insecurity brings to their lives every day. However, that refuge only lasts as long as the school day. After that, these young people have no home to go to. And the effects of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic have only made these circumstance more dire.

For unaccompanied students experiencing homelessness, programs like Second Home are often the difference between graduation from high school and a life on the street. HB 2544 would fund these programs. OSBA urges your support for HB 2544.