



Boys & Girls Aid

January 27, 2021

Royce Bowlin
Oregon Alliance
15 82nd Drive Suite 20
Gladstone, OR 97027

I am writing on behalf of the Homeless Youth Advisory Committee (HYAC), to express support for HB 2544. The 2015 Legislature directed ODHS to appoint a cross-system advisory group to coordinate statewide policy and planning for addressing the needs of youth. This group – the HYAC - represents leaders from state and local government agencies and nonprofit organizations in communities across the state. The Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) has been the agency responsible for coordinating statewide planning for delivery of services to youth experiencing homeless and their families.

The 2020 Legislative Short Session saw increased statewide momentum on youth homelessness, with HB4039 being positively promoted by a wide array of service providers and moving through the session on a positive trajectory. We are pleased to see HB 2544 introduced in the 2021 session. The Oregon Alliance is to be commended for your continued focus on ensuring these young people received the support and services needed to change the trajectory of their livings.

ODHS' homeless youth program has not received any additional state funding support since 2015. Since that time, the number of youth experiencing homelessness has continued to rise. Youth-serving programs have attempted to shoulder the load of increased demand for services, but it has proven difficult to expand and enhance services to appropriately meet the need. Additionally, safe housing specific to unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness continue to be a challenge. The proposed legislation would take a small step towards “rightsizing” the commitment to this vulnerable population of youth and young adults and expands service to include the Host Home program model.

We will continue to update our membership about this legislation and encourage advocacy across in our communities and networks. Please let us know if there is anything else we do to be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Vera Stoulii, MRA
Co-Chair, Oregon Homeless Youth Advisory Committee