



Native American Youth and Family Center

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February 24, 2021

To: House Committee on Human Services

RE: HB 2544 – Support Oregon’s Unaccompanied Houseless Youth

Chair Williams, Vice-Chairs Leif and Ruiz, and members of the House Committee on Human Services, my name is Miranda Mishan and I serve as the Housing and Economic Development Policy Coordinator at the Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA) in Portland. NAYA is a wraparound agency, serving roughly 2,000 individuals and impacting the lives of over 10,000 individuals throughout the region each year. We have services for youth of all ages and a wide array of family services. Additionally, NAYA offers a range of education, health, housing, economic development, and community support programs. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of House Bill 2544.

Communities of color, particularly Native Americans in Oregon experience homelessness at disproportionate rates to other demographics. These disparities are reflected in youth homelessness at the national level, with 51% of Unaccompanied Houseless Youth identifying as youth of color. With youth homelessness as the number one indicator of adult homelessness, UHY services are in line with NAYA’s mission to reduce homelessness in the Native American community. NAYA works to address youth homelessness through a culturally specific lens, and we support the allocation of funds for the expansion of culturally specific services that provide options for youth to get housed and stay housed.

House Bill 2544 makes much needed investments in Oregon’s youth homelessness programs. Currently, Oregon invests only \$2.5 each biennium to serve homeless youth despite ranking first for youth homelessness nationally. We know that existing host home programs and culturally specific services are effective tools to tackling chronic homelessness, and with additional investments, organizations like NAYA will be able to reach more youth more effectively. On behalf of the NAYA Family Center, I am asking for your support of House Bill 2544, and a \$4.4 million budget increase for services for Oregon’s Unaccompanied Homeless Youth.

Thank you for your time.



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Sincerely,

Miranda Mishan
Housing & Economic Development Policy Coordinator
Native American Youth & Family Center