

Chair Hartman, Vice Chair Nguyen, Vice Chair Scharf, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to Oregon's children, youth, and young adults. As the Mayor of the City of Toledo, Co-Chair of the Lincoln County Homeless Advisory Board and current Past President of the Oregon Mayor's Association, I am dedicated to helping ensure that all our children are housed in a clean and sustainable environment.

I am writing to you today to advocate in support of HB 3079 and provide and ensure a full continuum of services for Oregon's unaccompanied houseless youth, those who are not in the physical custody of their parents or guardians, and who are homeless.

I hope you will join me in affirming housing as a basic human right for all Oregonians, especially our youth. Oregon has the 4th highest number of houseless youth in the nation.

HB 3079 provides funding support for homeless youth services across Oregon through the Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program, a model with a strong national reputation, for which Oregon is considered a leader. This Program provides youth with long-term housing support as well as a stable home, mentorship, and support system while they attend school. This legislation also provides financing to expand or enhance existing shelter facilities, outreach, culturally specific services, mental health/substance use services, and other transitional housing options for houseless youth. These bills will also dedicate funding to providing assistance to school-aged youth and families to prevent evictions or rapidly rehouse them if they do become houseless.

My wife and I raised five sons here in Toledo. Our home was a shelter for many other young men throughout the many years we raised our own. We were often asked, why do you have four couches? Because they were usually occupied, sometimes for months. The Lincoln County School District had over 700 homeless youth in 2024. That is just over 13% of our student population! We must come together to address this issue, as it will affect those young people and our society well into the next decades.

In the United States, half of homeless adults first experienced homelessness in their youth. We know that by investing in services for this population that we can and will deter lifetimes of housing instability and homelessness. Every child and young adult deserves to have access to

safe and stable support services that help them thrive. HB 3079 ensures that is a reality for our young Oregonians experiencing homelessness.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Rod Cross

Mayor

City of Toledo