



parrott Creek

Serving Children and Families

Testimony to the House Committee on Human Services in regards to HB 2544

February 26, 2021

Chair Williams, Co-Chairs Lief and Ruiz, distinguished members of the committee. I am writing today in support of HB 2544.

Oregon has the highest rate of youth homelessness compared to other states. In the 2018-19 school year, there were 3,700 reported unaccompanied homeless youth. We know the number is much higher. **If we want to end adult homelessness, we must prevent youth homelessness.**

The number one predictor of adult homelessness is being homeless as a youth. Youth become homeless mainly for two reasons: family distress and family dysfunction/abuse, and as many as 75% have a chronic medical condition. Also, LGBTQ and youth of color are disproportionately more likely to become homeless. If a youth continues on to adult homelessness the cost to the public system is in excess of \$3M for emergency services, medical care, housing, law enforcement, etc.

HB 2544 makes crucial investments in services. Specifically, this bill will invest:

- \$2.2M to expand Host Homes, housing that keeps youth in school or enables them to return to school by providing a home, food and a supportive family. Youth living in Host Homes are 40% more likely to graduate in comparison to youth who are without housing.
- \$2.2M to expand or enhance existing shelter facilities, outreach, culturally specific services, mental health/substance use prevention, and transitional living options.

Parrott Creek Child & Family Services expanded its programs during the COVID-19 pandemic to respond to increases in acute needs of children and, particularly homeless youth. We now offer:

- Case Management, Transitional Housing and Independent Living support to homeless youth and youth aging out of foster care facing housing insecurity;
- Residential and Outpatient Treatment for highly traumatized youth in the child welfare and juvenile justice system;
- Transition support into stable housing
- Clean-and-sober housing for mothers under the age of 25 reunifying with their children (predominantly infants and toddlers) have been in the care and custody of ODHS.

I appreciate your continued commitment in ensuring that ALL of Oregon's children have the opportunity to grow up in strong, stable and loving families.

Simon Fulford
Executive Director