



Oregon Women's Rights Coalition

## HB 2454 and HB 2456- Support

Chair Dexter, Vice Chair Helfrich, Vice Chair Gamba and members of the Committee

In 2021 OWRC supported HB 2544 in support of providing more services for youth experiencing homelessness. That funding request was approved and the results are encouraging.

### **HB 2544 achieved several key things:**

- Allocated \$1.8 million for Oregon's Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program (YEHP) (formerly Runaway and Homeless Youth) of ODHS' Self-Sufficiency Programs
- Allocated ~ \$1.5 million in funding for host home projects, which provide longer-term housing, nutrition, and mentorship opportunities for youth
- Specifically defined unaccompanied houseless youth in law
- Increased YEHP staff capacity

Now, OWRC is proud to support both HB 2454 and HB 2456.

The need is great as you will hear. The ability to connect with youth who may be reluctant to come forward by providing appropriate services is great. There probably have always been youth who have of necessity left home to escape abuse. It is good that this program can grow.

I have a personal story to share. At one of my Milwaukie High School reunions I was chatting with another graduate whom I had been in school with since 7<sup>th</sup> grade. As we were talking he shared with me that he had worked his senior year in order to pay for a cheap apartment and food as he had left home because of violence. He eventually became a union painter and admitted that he was grateful for the union pension he would receive. I don't think anyone at the high school realized he was not living at home. As an 18-year-old he didn't want to share.

These bills will help other youth gain the resources and counseling they need to succeed.

Marcia Kelley

Public Policy Advocate