

February 24, 2021

Chair Williams, Vice-Chairs Leif and Ruiz, and members of the committee,

My name is Patti Whitney-Wise, retired ED of Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon and a current member of the EMO Public Policy Advocacy Committee.

I am writing in strong support of HB 2544 which will fund critical programming for unaccompanied homeless youth in Oregon.

My husband, a retired Episcopal Priest, and I have had significant involvement with teens at risk of homelessness, particularly during our own teen children's years. They both brought home friends who were having trouble at home or were without homes and we gave them shelter and food and some parental guidance and advice. Three of these youth continue to be extended members of our family, graduating from high school, getting jobs, and raising their own families.

We were fortunate to be able to afford to provide for them and have seen first-hand how lives can be changed. Their contributions to society far outweigh the cost of food and shelter. I believe there are many families who would like to help but need financial help to do so.

You will hear from many others about the crisis of so many youth in Oregon who have nowhere to turn and the tremendous cost of not helping to provide basic needs and support services for these youth.

I write to you from the perspective of a parent, church, and community member who wants our state to shine as a place of nurture and success for every child. I concur with EMO's Statement of Principles: "We are called to "love justice" and to act in solidarity with those on the margins."

Please pass HB 2544.