

Sarah Arbuckle

HB 4149 | Codifying McKinney-Vento

Senate Education Committee

Chair Frederick, Vice Chair Weber and members of the committee, for the record, my name is Sarah Arbuckle, and I am here testifying in a personal capacity in strong support of House Bill 4149.

Before returning to the legislature in 2024, I served as a Program Analyst on the McKinney-Vento team at the Oregon Department of Education. In that role, I supported school districts across Oregon in accessing federal American Rescue Plan funds for students experiencing homelessness. I developed reimbursement processes and guidance so districts could quickly access resources to meet students' immediate needs.

Through this work, I saw how impactful the McKinney-Vento program can be when districts are supported. Funds helped provide essentials such as heaters, tents, sleeping bags, transportation, temporary lodging and utilities, food access, and even graduation caps and gowns, items that ensured students could stay safe, attend school, and fully participate in their education. These were not extras; they were necessities.

I also saw the strain on the educators responsible for this work. McKinney-Vento liaisons are deeply committed, but they are rarely funded at a full-time level. Many serve at a fraction of an FTE, or alongside other major leadership roles. This makes it incredibly difficult to provide the level of support these students need and deserve.

HB 4149 strengthens and codifies protections so students experiencing homelessness can enroll immediately and receive consistent support. It establishes clearer expectations, coordination, and accountability at the district

and state level. At a time when federal protections and funding may be uncertain, ensuring these safeguards exist in state law is both prudent and necessary.

When we build systems that work for our most vulnerable students, we strengthen outcomes for all students. I urge your support of HB 4149.

Thank you for your time and consideration.