



# Bridgeway

Freedom Through Recovery

March 1, 2021

Dear Chair Williams, Vice-Chairs Leif and Ruiz, and Members of the House Human Services Committee:

As Chief Executive Officer of Bridgeway Recovery Services dedicated to providing services to improve the lives of youth and young adults in Marion and Polk Counties, I urge you to support House Bill 2544. HB2544 increases critical funding by \$4.4M per biennium for services and supports for youth and young adults to attain stable and affordable housing.

Our organization provides chemical dependency and mental health treatment. Bridgeway Recovery Services has expanded its services to include medically managed withdrawal, problem gambling treatment, adolescent services, corrections services, primary care and housing.

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.

#### Board of Directors

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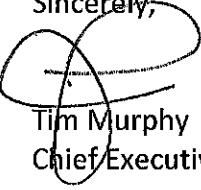
Restoring Lives  
by Taking Control  
of Addiction

This bill makes crucial investments in services. Specifically, HB 2544 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.

Thank you for your continued commitment in ensuring youth and young adults who are homeless have access to high-quality supports and services so they too will have an opportunity to thrive and live their best lives.

Sincerely,



Tim Murphy  
Chief Executive Officer