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To: House Committee on Early Childhood & Human Services
Oregon Legislature
Via Email

From: Sandra McDonough
Board member, New Avenues for Youth

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Chair Hartman, Vice Chair Nguyen, Vice Chair Scharf and Committee members:

I am writing today to express my support for House Bill 3079, which would play a critical role in our effort to stop the cycle of homelessness across our state.

HB3079 would intensify the state's commitment to ending youth homelessness. This commitment is critical if we are ever going to truly cure Oregon's homelessness crisis. Nonprofits like New Avenues for Youth, and other great youth-serving organizations across our state, have demonstrated time and again that the single most effective way to end adult homelessness is to intervene early, when the individuals are still youths, providing housing, education, counseling, job training and other services that break the cycle of homelessness before it becomes a chronic problem.

As our homelessness crisis has become more acute over the last decade, New Avenues and other nonprofits have developed innovative programs to assist young people facing unstable conditions. Over the last few years, the state's Youth Experiencing Homelessness (YEH) program has provided much needed assistance to this effort. But costs are increasing and funding sources are becoming more unstable. A greater commitment from the state of Oregon will ensure that we can continue our efforts to help homeless youth today and, most importantly, prevent chronic adult homelessness over the long term. HB3079 would stabilize funding available under the YEH program so that nonprofits like New Avenues can continue their important work and, importantly, it would enable DHS to expand YEH funding to counties that have no options for housing unstable youth. Additionally, HB3079 would begin to develop a long-term allocation strategy that will help stabilize our statewide response to youth homelessness and create a foundation for real, systemic change.

Please pass HB3079 out of the House Committee on Early Childhood & Human Services. Most importantly, when it is subsequently referred to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means, please continue to advocate for HB3079, urging adequate funding so that the promise of this bill -- true assistance to nonprofits across Oregon dedicated to ending chronic homelessness -- becomes a reality.

Thank you.