



Date: January 31, 2023
To: House Committee on Housing and Homelessness
From: Stephanie Phillips Bridges, Policy Analyst for the Urban League of Portland
Re: Support for Stable Housing for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness, HB 2454

Chair Dexter, Vice-Chair Gamba, Vice-Chair Helfrich, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Stephanie Phillips Bridges, and I am a Policy Analyst with the Urban League of Portland and I respectfully submit this testimony in support of House Bill 2454. The Urban League of Portland is one of Oregon's oldest civil rights and social service organizations, empowering African Americans and others to achieve equality in education, employment, health, economic security, and quality of life across Oregon and SW Washington.

Nationally, marginalized identities and communities are disproportionately represented among the homeless population; Black youth are 83% more likely to experience homelessness and LGBTQIA+ youth are 120% more likely to experience homelessness. Oregon ranks first in the country for youth homelessness. The number one indicator of adult homelessness is youth homelessness. In the United States, half of homeless adults first experienced homelessness in their youth. The Oregon Department of Education's presentation, "A Focus on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth," "youth most at risk of adult homelessness are aging out of foster care when they turn 18, ages 18-25 with less than a high school diploma or GED, identify as LGBTQ, are parenting and unmarried, and are Hispanic or Black. The Oregon Shelter report for August 2019 states that the 2018 Point-in-Time Count found 317 youth under age 18 experienced homelessness, of which 70% were unsheltered and 992 youth ages 18-24 experienced homelessness, of which 60% were unsheltered. In 2018, HUD found Oregon to be rated 1 of the top 5 states with unsheltered and unaccompanied homeless youth."¹ In the 2021-2022 school year, there were "18,358 youth experiencing homelessness"² identified by the Oregon Department of Education. Youth homelessness in Oregon rose 32% as a result of the 2008 recession. We certainly expect similar outcomes as a result of the economic downturn, as well as the impacts of the wildfires Oregon has experienced recently.

Providing services for unaccompanied homeless youth helps keep youth out of a lifetime of homelessness. Funding allocated by HB 2454 will provide and ensure a full continuum of services for Oregon's unaccompanied homeless youth, those who are not in the physical custody of their parents or guardians, and who are homeless. Additionally, HB 2454 will provide \$12.5 million in grants to expand Oregon's shelter and support services: enhancing existing facilities, ensuring funding for outreach, culturally specific services, behavioral health services, and other transitional housing options. HB 2454 will provide \$12.5 million to support host home providers across Oregon, a model with a strong national reputation, for which Oregon is considered a leader. Host homes provide youth with long-term housing support as well as a stable home, mentorship, and support system while they attend school.

¹ Oregon Department of Education, A Focus on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth, 2022.

² Oregon Department of Education, Student Enrollment 2021-2022, 2022.



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We know that by investing in services for this population, we can and will deter lifetimes of housing instability and homelessness. Every child and young adult deserve to have access to safe and stable support services that help them thrive.

I hope you will join me in affirming housing as a basic human right for all Oregonians, especially our youth. Please pass HB 2454 to ensure that we support our youth experiencing homelessness.

Respectfully,

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