

Chair Williams, Vice-Chairs Ruiz and Scharf, and Members of the Committee,

Housing Oregon is a membership-based statewide association of affordable housing community development corporations (CDCs) committed to serving and supporting low-income Oregonians across the housing needs spectrum – from homeless to homeowner. We support and strengthen our members by providing training on industry best practices, peer support networks, communications, and advocacy on local and statewide policy issues.

Housing Oregon is in strong support of HB 4013 and urges you to join us in supporting the essential services this bill will help fund. Oregon has the highest rate of youth homelessness in the United States. More than 22,000 K-12 Oregonians experienced homelessness in the year prior to the pandemic. Oregon's youth homelessness crisis impacts those on the margins worst; Black youth are nearly 3 times more likely than white youth to experience homelessness nationwide, and about one-third of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ.

Housing instability, made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic, poses a drastic threat to youths' future success. Just 54% of homeless students in Oregon graduate from high school, the lowest graduation rate among all major demographics tracked by the Oregon Department of Education. Passage of HB 4013 will enable a critical expansion of services for one of Oregon's most vulnerable populations.

Young adults who experience homelessness without family and community support face the same challenges as young adults within the foster system, but lack similar supports. HB 4013 addresses this disparity by expanding eligibility for two programs: the Independent Living Housing Subsidy Program and Oregon's Foster Youth Tuition and Fee Waiver. An estimated 50% of chronically homeless adults experienced homelessness as a transition-aged youth. Allowing youth transitioning into independent living to access affordable housing and higher education is crucial to breaking the cycle of chronic homelessness and ensuring stable housing as these youth enter adulthood.

While the Department of Human Services currently provides grants to a number of organizations working to serve the needs of Oregon's youth experiencing homelessness, a number of areas of the state, particularly Eastern Oregon and the Oregon Coast, lack DHS-contracted services for houseless youth. HB 4013 will provide grants to organizations in currently underserved or altogether unserved areas of Oregon, ensuring that youth experiencing homelessness in these regions have the critical services they need to find safe and stable housing, complete their education, and find employment.

HB 4013 represents a chance to stand alongside Oregon's school-aged youth as they confront the realities of being a homeless student. We are all called to work with these impressive young people to create a future where all students have access to safe, stable, and affordable housing. For every \$1 we invest in preventing youth homelessness, we are estimated to save \$5. We urge Oregon to make that investment.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Kevin Cronin
Housing Oregon
Director, Member Relations and Industry Support
P: 971-347-8503
E: kevin@housingoregon.org
PO Box 8427
Portland, OR 97207
www.housingoregon.org