

Submitter: Bethany Holmes

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure: HB2456

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

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to Oregon's children, youth, and young adults. As the Director of Safe Families for Children of Klamath County, I am dedicated to keeping children and youth safe and families together in Klamath County. I am writing to you today, to advocate for full funding for HB 2454 and HB 2456, to provide and ensure a full continuum of services for Oregon's unaccompanied houseless youth, those who are not in the physical custody of their parents or guardians, and who are homeless.

I hope you will join me in affirming housing as a basic human right for all Oregonians, especially our youth. Oregon ranks among the first in the nation for our houseless youth population.

HB 2454 and HB 2456 provide \$6.25 M 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. HB 2454 and HB 2456 also provide \$12.5 M to expand or enhance existing shelter facilities, outreach, culturally specific services, mental health/substance use services, and other transitional housing options for houseless youth.

These bills will also dedicate funding to providing assistance to school-aged youth and families to prevent evictions or rapidly rehouse them if they do become houseless.

We work with a teen mom who was houseless when we met her and her baby. We put them in a safe Host Home together until she found housing. She since then has graduated high school with a diploma and is attending college classes. We continue to mentor this youth and provide her with emotional supports.

In the United States, half of homeless adults first experienced homelessness in their youth. We know that by investing in services for this population that we can and will deter lifetimes of housing instability and homelessness. Every child and young adult deserves to have access to safe and stable support services that help them thrive.

HB 2454 and 2456 ensure that is a reality for our young Oregonians experiencing homelessness.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Bethany Holmes