



**HOUSING
OREGON**

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February 24, 2020

Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Co-Chair Senator Betsy Johnson
Co-Chair Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward
Co-Chair Representative Dan Rayfield
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Attention Co-Chairs Johnson, Steiner Hayward, Rayfield and members of the Committee:

Housing Oregon supports HB 4039, which would provide services for unaccompanied homeless youth in Oregon including providing \$300,000 to conduct a needs assessment, \$1.2 million to expand the host home network, which provides a home for unaccompanied homeless youth while they finish high school, and \$1 million to expand existing shelter, mental health, transitional housing, and other services for Runaway and Homeless Youth.

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.

Oregon has the highest per capita rate of homeless children and youth in this country. During the 2018-2019 school year, over 22,000 Oregon K-12 students experienced homelessness. One in six of these young people were separated from their parents while homeless, according to the Oregon Department of Education.

Unaccompanied youth homelessness is a statewide challenge. HB 4039 would invest in housing and mental health supports for Oregon's unaccompanied houseless youth and design a robust statewide continuum of services that will help these resilient young people thrive.


We appreciate the leadership of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) and the Oregon Alliance of Children, Families, and Communities calling attention to this crisis. An EMO partnership with the Beaverton School District places homeless youth with volunteer home providers shows programs targeted to address this issue do work. The Beaverton program is resulting in 96% of participating students earning a high school diploma. Statewide, the high school graduation rate for homeless students is 54%.

State funding would allow similar programs to ensure more unaccompanied homeless youth get the housing, meals and educational stability they deserve. These youth are more likely to drop out of school to seek employment in order to meet these basic needs. In addition, they are more likely to frequently move from school to school, further complicating their chances of successfully completing high school.

Housing Oregon is proud to support HB 4039 and the spotlight it shines on the needs of the 3700 young people throughout our state who struggle with housing. Unaccompanied houseless youth are often survivors of domestic and sexual violence and are disproportionately students of color. They deserve the support of us adults as they battle long odds to stay in school, stay healthy and stay off the streets.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill. You can reach Housing Oregon at 503-475-6056 or brian@housingoregon.org.

Sincerely,



Brian Hoop
Director, Housing Oregon



Sheila Stiley
Board Chair, Housing Oregon
Executive Director
NW Coastal Housing