



February 24, 2020

Joint Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Human Services
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE, HR F
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Support for HB 4039-A

Chairs Beyer and Nosse, and Members of the Committee:

The City of Eugene supports HB 4039-A, which increases financial resources and services to support unaccompanied homeless youth as well as direct the Department of Human Services to conduct a study to identify current capacity and ongoing needs in the systems that work to support unaccompanied homeless youth.

Two years ago, the City of Eugene helped support the launch of the 15th Night initiative, a youth-informed movement that works to end youth homelessness by better connecting existing resources in our community and finding innovative ways to help keep kids in school and off the streets. With now over three dozen community partners, the 15th Night is continuing to expand its reach throughout and beyond Eugene, and to close gaps for unaccompanied youth by connecting them as quickly as possible with the resources they need, including to host homes through the local organization A Family for Every Child.

In addition to ongoing support for 15th Night, the City of Eugene has also supported a number of projects that provide housing and shelter to homeless youth, including St Vincent de Paul's acquisition of a former church building for rehabilitation into 13 transitional housing units for homeless girls age 16-18, the renovation of a 12-unit apartment building for housing for youth aging out of foster care, the rehabilitation of a residential facility for male juvenile ex-offenders, and ongoing support for our community's local shelter for homeless youth.

While our community efforts have helped many youth in our area, the need is great and outpaces our current capacity. As we continue to improve access to critical services for unaccompanied homeless youth in our community, increased state investment in this issue will have a substantial impact. We believe if we do not address the significant needs around this issue now, we will see it years from now in the form of adults who will find it even harder to escape homelessness and poverty and lead productive lives.

We urge you to support HB 4069-A, in recognition of the significant benefits to our communities and the State of Oregon when all youth have the opportunity to thrive.

Sincerely,

Submitted electronically
Regan Watjus, Homeless Policy Analyst