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February 23, 2021

House Committee on Housing
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for HB 2163

Chair Fahey, Vice-Chair Campos, Vice-Chair Morgan, and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Chris Coughlin. I am the Policy, Advocacy, and Engagement Director at Our Children Oregon. Our Children Oregon's (OCO) mission is to be a voice and force for the common good for all Oregon children, ensuring all children have the resources and opportunities they need to reach their full potential. OCO is the result of the merger between two historic Oregon non-profits: The Children's Trust Fund of Oregon and Children First for Oregon. We elevate data and lived experience to prioritize children and center communities. We continue to connect a community of 115 advocates, coalitions, and organizations through The Children's Agenda, a legislative agenda championing equitable state legislative policies and shared investments to improving the lives of Oregon's children and their families.

HB 2163: Investing in long-term rental assistance for Oregon youth at risk of homelessness is part of the 2021 Children's Agenda. This bill would establish a Long-Term Rental Assistance (LTRA) fund at Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS), which will invest in an initial program focused on youth exiting the foster care system, other institutional settings, or otherwise experiencing homelessness. We support HB 2163 because:

- Oregon ranks first nationwide with the highest rate of youth homelessness
- One-third (33%) of unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness were formerly in the foster care system
- Of these unaccompanied youth, 51% are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color; of which 1 in 3 (34%) are Black youth

It is estimated that half of adults who are chronically houseless experienced houselessness as transition-aged youth.

Prior to the pandemic, high housing costs and rent burden in our state meant that youth were not being adequately served by existing rent

The Children's Agenda

is a broad slate of equitable investments and policy solutions to meet the holistic needs of Oregon children, youth, and their families.



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assistance resources. COVID-19 has added new layers to this problem for youth exiting foster care and other institutional settings, who are more likely to be affected by the economic conditions that make it difficult to find and maintain housing. FosterClub, a national network for young people in foster care, conducted a series of nationwide polls during the pandemic of current and former foster youth with some striking results. In [May of 2020](#), 23% of young people reported they were forced to move or at risk of being forced to move. By [December 2020](#), this number increased to 43%.

The pandemic has highlighted many of the gaps in our state's safety net to ensure housing stability for Oregon youth, and it is not a new issue. However, we can start to transform these outcomes through the Long-Term Rent Assistance program. By targeting one of the primary entry points into adult houselessness, Oregon can provide stability and support to youth as they transition to adulthood.

We urge you to support HB 2163 and invest in meaningful assistance for Oregon's youth at risk of houselessness.

On behalf of the Our Children Oregon team,

Chis Coughlin, Policy, Advocacy, and Community Engagement Director

View the 2021 Children's Agenda at www.ourchildrenoregon.org/2021-childrens-agenda