

I'm writing you as a Board Member of The Link. The Link is a front-line service provider of a continuum of services, emergency shelter and housing for youth and young families experiencing homelessness. The organization is a part of a broader state-wide coalition of youth service providers called the Youth Services Network (YSN). The Link along with the YSN has been advocating towards ending youth homelessness for a number of years and this package will make it that much closer to becoming a reality. We know that shelter saves lives and housing ends homelessness. We want to lift up the Homeless Youth Act listed in the legislation, but we fully support everything that is included in the Pathways Home Act.

Youth homelessness is a crisis in our state! On any given night there are 4,872 unaccompanied youth who are experiencing homelessness. These are young people who become homeless due to many reasons-we see youth who are kicked out due to their sexual orientation or gender identity, youth whose family can't afford housing large enough for the whole family so the older youth are finding alternative housing; youth who are falling through the cracks or aging out of our foster care system and more.

We see youth who are then forced to make horrible decisions to survive-some having to live in a car, go between libraries and public transportation, live in an encampment, find a doorway of a building or an abandoned building to live out of, or trade sex for a place to sleep.

These young people deserve a safe and stable place to live and support with accomplishing the goals that they have for themselves! And we as a state have an opportunity to do this! We can reduce and end youth homelessness-an investment in the state's Homeless Youth Act is the way to do this!

The Homeless Youth Act provides a continuum of services (street outreach, drop-in center, homeless prevention, emergency shelter, host homes and all models of housing) that can provide young people with what they need and deserve to get out of homelessness! Please support the Pathways Home Act which includes a **\$25 million increase in 2024/2025 and \$40 million in 2026/2027!**

Thanks,
Cristen

Cristen Purdy
LOCATION PRESIDENT

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