



*The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 100-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.*

February 3, 2020

To: [House Human Services Committee](#)  
Representative Alissa Keny-Guyer, Chair  
[hhs.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:hhs.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov)

Re: [HB 4039](#) – Runaway and Homeless Youth – **Comments**

The League published a study on Runaway and Homeless Youth in February 2007, which supported services to families in crisis and youth separated from their families. Thirteen years later, we find that the Department of Human Services provides services to families in crisis but has not provided services to youth separated from their families. The funding for Runaway and Homeless Youth programs has been minimal from the state. Custody of these children is not always warranted, but it is in the state's interest to provide safety in living situations, healthy environments and continuation of basic education.

Private charities and local governments have provided some services but lack a statewide system of shelter programs. Each region of the state should have a homeless shelter which should be supported by public and private funds. Private agencies often lack the consistency of funding and expertise in the behavior management of children who may have had traumatic experiences. It is time for the state to help local agencies develop the shelters in all regions of the state.

The disbursement of funds through 3 state agencies has not helped maintain existing shelter programs, and funds can be diverted to other programs. There should be a consistent specific funding source to provide safe supportive shelters for youth in all regions of the state.

This current bill does not provide a stable system for the state. These funds should be directed through a state agency such as DHS or Oregon Housing and Community Services for the development and maintenance of teen shelters throughout the state. We request your consideration of this option for these homeless teens.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca L. Gladstone".

Rebecca Gladstone  
LWVOR President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Nibler".

Karen Nibler  
LWVOR Social Policy Coordinator