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Chair Williams, Vice Chair Leif, Vice Chair Ruiz, and Members of the Committee,

Working with over 150 congregations, organizations, and interfaith partners, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) strives to envision communities of faith in ministry together creating a more peaceful, just, sustainable, and compassionate world.

EMO strongly supports HB 2505, echoing our community's demand for investment in a more equitable child welfare system.

Within Oregon's foster care system, historically marginalized communities are deeply impacted by racism, ableism, sexism, ageism, homophobia, transphobia, and other systems of oppression, leading to injustices such as overrepresentation of these communities in the foster care system and underservice of family affirming resources. HB 2505 will work against such inequities to create a more just and equitable child welfare system.

EMO's work with unaccompanied houseless youth has exemplified how necessary it is to increase the investment in safe and equitable resources for children experiencing housing insecurity and those in the foster care system. With the highest rate of youth houselessness in the United States, 1/3 of unaccompanied houseless youth in Oregon were previously in the foster care system. It is clear the current system is not working. We stand with the current and former foster youth who developed this legislation and who are telling you, from their lived experiences, what they need. EMO is committed to celebrating and supporting these remarkable young people – whether in the foster care system or now on their own, looking for stability.

As people of faith, we believe that a healthy society provides for the well-being of all, and this includes ensuring the protection of all children. We are asking you to support HB 2505 to strengthen the existing Governor's Child Foster Care Advisory Commission so that it can recommend actions to remove bias from child welfare decisions. **Individuals and families impacted by child welfare decisions deserve fair and equitable treatment and access to services.**

Sincerely,

Ella Burke

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon