



Fenix Youth Project Inc.
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To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Amber Green, and I am the Founder of Fenix Youth Project, a homeless youth-serving agency dedicated to supporting young individuals aged 14-24 who are experiencing homelessness. In presenting this testimony, I am joined by members of our Youth Action Board and our passionate homeless youth services interns, who bring their diverse experiences and insights to our organization's mission.

At Fenix Youth Project, we witness firsthand the struggles and challenges faced by homeless youth in our community. Among these challenges, the reluctance of some youth to seek shelter in traditional facilities due to fear of discrimination and judgment is a pressing concern. Despite the harsh conditions they endure, some young adults prefer to brave the elements outdoors rather than seek refuge in shelters where they feel their identities may be disparaged.

"When I was homeless, finding shelter was a constant struggle. I often felt unwelcome and misunderstood in traditional shelters. It's time for change." - Matthias Dunlap, Chair Youth Action Board

"As an intern working directly with homeless youth, I see the barriers they face in accessing safe shelter. Many fear discrimination and mistreatment, which prevents them from seeking help." - Caroline Mollenauer, Homeless Services Intern

It is imperative to recognize that homelessness does not discriminate based on age, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Every individual deserves access to safe and inclusive shelter, free from prejudice and discrimination. However, the reality is that many homeless shelters lack adequate measures to address the unique needs of young adults, including those who identify as LGBTQ+.

"Our homeless youth deserve better. It's time for shelters to be held accountable for providing inclusive and supportive environments for all individuals." -Alex Allen, Youth Action Board Member



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"With proper training and accountability measures in place, shelters can become places where homeless youth feel safe, respected, and supported on their journey to stability." - Ayana Henries, Homeless Youth Service Intern

HB577 represents a crucial step towards rectifying this injustice. By establishing a licensing program for homeless shelters, this bill aims to ensure that all shelters adhere to specific standards of care and inclusivity. This includes providing training for staff to create a welcoming environment for individuals of all ages, sexual orientations, and gender identities.

The implementation of a licensing program will not only improve the quality of services provided by shelters but also instill confidence in homeless youth, encouraging them to seek assistance without fear of judgment or discrimination. It is time to prioritize the well-being and dignity of all individuals experiencing homelessness, regardless of their background or identity.

As the Founder of Fenix Youth Project, alongside our Youth Action Board members and homeless youth services interns, I have seen the transformative impact that inclusive and supportive shelter environments can have on the lives of homeless youth. By supporting HB577, we can ensure that every young person has access to the resources and support they need to rebuild their lives and pursue a brighter future.

"By supporting HB577, we are advocating for a more equitable and compassionate society where every homeless youth has the opportunity to thrive." - Kymiya Maddox, Homeless Youth Services Intern

I urge you to support HB577 and take a stand for the rights and dignity of homeless youth in our community. Together, we can create a more compassionate and inclusive society for all.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Amber Green

Founder, Fenix Youth Project