



March 17, 2025

Deschutes Civic Assembly on Youth Homelessness
The Laboratory for the American Conversation &
Central Oregon Civic Action Project
c/o Elizabeth Marino
1500 SW Chandler Ave
Bend, OR 97702

Dear Deschutes Civic Assembly:

Thank you for your time and work studying the issue of youth homelessness. We appreciate the civil discussions and thoughtful deliberations that led to the recommendations. Listed below are Deschutes County's commitments to recommendations relating to County services and/or advocacy:

- **Recommendation 2 - A central hub with a recreation center run by Bend Parks and Recreation; a safe place for at-risk teens; designated space for programs and non-governmental organizations that would allow teens to access benefits at one central location.**
 - Deschutes County role: Health Services operates The Drop, a center that serves youth and young adults ages 14 - 27. Located in Redmond and Bend, The Drop is meant to be a safe and supportive place where people make connections that could have a positive impact on their life. If Bend Parks and Recreation decides to open a teen recreation center, County staff will be available to provide advice and input based on experience operating The Drop.

- **Recommendation 3 - Improve foster care system.**
 - Deschutes County role: advocacy; continue to provide funding to CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates); continue to provide funding to J Bar J and promoting J Bar J's annual fundraising event.

- **Recommendation 5 - Childcare support for families with young children to help break the cycle of poverty.**
 - Deschutes County role: advocacy; continue to invest in non-profits such as Mountain Star Nursery; advocate for and support our Community Action Agency, NeighborImpact, in providing Head Start programming; and continue to support childcare services - the County allocated millions of ARPA dollars in support of these efforts.

- **Recommendation 7 – Use social media advertisements and posters in public spaces to increase public awareness of available services and indicate who to contact for more information.**
 - Deschutes County role: advocacy; continue to increase social, mental, emotional, and physical health supports in schools participating in the Healthy Schools Program; continue to provide mental health services to youth at Deschutes County School-Based Health Centers; and put additional efforts to increase awareness of these services.

- **Recommendation 8 – Expand public transit in Deschutes County.**
 - Deschutes County role: the County is not a transit provider but does approve the Deschutes County Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) Plan. Deschutes County will continue to evaluate how best to meet the transportation needs of the community as it reviews and approves STIF Plans. The County will continue working as a member of COIC to advocate for improved transit.

- **Recommendation 14 – Provide education on homelessness and human trafficking, starting as early in the education process as school districts deem appropriate and feasible throughout Deschutes County.**
 - Deschutes County role: advocacy; continue to increase social, mental, emotional, and physical health supports in schools participating in the Healthy Schools Program; and continue to instill protective factors among youth through Deschutes County School-Based Health Centers to prevent homelessness and human trafficking.

- **Recommendation 16 – Prioritize funding for inpatient psychiatric care for minors.**
 - Deschutes County role: this recommendation has been a long-standing goal for the Board and the Health Services Department and is a Deschutes County priority for the 2025 Legislative Session. We will continue to advocate and lead the effort for inpatient psychiatric care for minors.

- **Recommendation 21 – Direct Deschutes County and the Coordinated Homeless Response Office to dedicate funding to partner with J Bar J and other non-governmental organizations to educate the general public about youth homelessness and prevention.**
 - Deschutes County role: continue providing support and funding to J Bar J and have the recently restructured Coordinated Homeless Response Office evaluate and respond to the recommendation.

Thank you again for your time serving on the Civic Assembly and the recommendations for addressing youth homelessness in our community.

Board of County Commissioners,



Anthony DeBone, Chair



Patti Adair, Vice Chair

Phil Chang, Commissioner