



## Written Comments for House Appropriations on the TDHCA Budget (Article VII)

February 11, 2019

- Introduce self
- Thank the committee
- TNOYS is a statewide membership organization with the mission to strengthen critical services for Texas youth and families to prevent homelessness and system involvement.
- I'm here today to request that you appropriate funding through TDHCA to support services for youth and young adults experiencing homelessness.
- The state of Texas does not dedicate funding specifically to serve this population currently.
- Through my work at TNOYS, I have spoken with young people in major cities across Texas who live under bridges, in abandoned buildings, and in cars. This issue is not specific to our major cities though; for example, I can recall learning of two teens in Montgomery County who lived in a tent in the woods behind their school, because they were homeless but still wanted to make it to class on time.
- I've talked to a young man who spent his 15<sup>th</sup> birthday living in a garbage can. I've talked to a young woman who was kidnapped by a trafficker when homeless, and to other young women who have reported being forced to sell sex to survive.
- Texas school districts identified approximately 18,000 students who were homeless and on their own during the 2016-2017 school year. There are many more young people experiencing homelessness, who are between the ages of 18 and 24. Many of you know that nearly one quarter of young adults exiting foster care experience homelessness.
- Young people experiencing homelessness have unique needs that distinguish them from adults. They will likely not succeed if they are just given a place to live on their own. They need thoughtful and comprehensive services and supports to prepare them for adulthood and help facilitate their success. They need the kind of support that most of us received from our parents, to help us grow into productive people.
- Our research and the research of many others suggests that sending young people who are on their own to shelters designed for adults is ineffective, traumatizing, and dangerous.
- Luckily, there are incredible nonprofits across Texas serving homeless young people. Their data and stories indicate that their specialized services work. Yet they are underfunded and services cannot meet demand. There are youth across



the state who need shelter or longer-term housing but are stuck in limbo on wait lists.

- Texas can do better.
- We respectfully request that you appropriate funds through TDCHA to support critical services for homeless youth and young adults.
- We believe the easiest way to accomplish this goal is to appropriate the funds through the existing Homeless Housing and Services (HHSP) program in the TDHCA budget. Because these funds are administered by cities, there would be little to no administrative cost to the state.
- We are asking for just \$3 million over the biennium. This is an amount that is almost negligible for the state of Texas, but that would make a world of difference to Texas' homeless youth.
- The providers that serve this population are creative and resourceful and many have found ways to access government funds, but those funds are increasingly limited, competitive, and not appropriate for meeting needs of young people.
- The state budget does not currently include funding specifically for sheltering or housing homeless youth and young adults, and such funding is desperately needed.
- Thank you for your time. TNOYS appreciates your public service and your willingness to hear from the public.