



Testimony: HB 519, House Finance Committee, 01/23/2025

Dear Chairman Weyler and esteemed members of the House Finance Committee:

My name is Ariel Hayes, I live in Dover, New Hampshire, and I am the Executive Director of the Youth Success Project— a youth led organization focused on ending youth and young adult homelessness in New Hampshire.

I am writing to ask you to support HB 519, making an appropriation to the Department of Health and Human Services to fund and support the Waypoint youth and young adult shelter.

When I was 22 years old, not long after graduating from college *summa cum laude* with two bachelor's degrees, I went through a break up and found myself living in my car. Because I had family support and a job lined up I was able to regain stability relatively quickly, however this is not the case for many other young people in my situation.

I also worked for Waypoint as a case manager for youth experiencing homelessness in the Rochester/Seacoast region for two years.

Youth and young adult homelessness is unique because:

- Young people generally do not meet the stereotypes that are associated with adult homelessness. We are good at flying under the radar and will do everything in our power to fit in with our peers— including showering and wearing nice clothing.
- We are especially vulnerable because this is often the first time experiencing homelessness. We often aren't familiar with the resources available and do not always know what to look out for to protect ourselves from trafficking or other dangers.
- It can be especially hard for us to regain stability because of no rental history, poor or no credit, and limited income.

Funding Waypoint's emergency shelter will allow Waypoint to continue to prevent adult or chronic homelessness that can and does often occur if young people don't get the developmentally appropriate support they need early on.

Additionally, adult shelters, where many people are experiencing chronic and long term homelessness, are not an appropriate place for young people aged 18 to 24 years old. Adult shelters, while life saving, can put young people at a greater risk of abuse and trafficking and it puts them at a greater risk of becoming chronically homeless.

This shelter has been a valuable addition to the youth homeless services continuum in New Hampshire and has met a real need in the Manchester community. Young people and the New Hampshire community will directly suffer if the funding is not renewed.

Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions.



YOUTH
SUCCESS
PROJECT

Sincerely,

Ariel Hayes

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Executive Director, Youth Success Project

nhyouthsuccess@gmail.com