**NEWS RELEASE**

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**Homeless Student Data Released**

*Despite improving economy, number of homeless students exceeds recession level*

*(Salem, Ore) –* For the third year in a row, Oregon’s population of homeless students is up over the previous year, reaching a level now exceeding that seen during the recession. The [data collected by Oregon Department of Education (ODE) staff](http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=113) shows 21,340 students, or 3.7 percent of the public school K-12 population, “lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence” as defined by the federal government. Another 1,929 children in Pre-K programs also fall under this definition.

“Expansion of services in recent years into early childhood programs has created awareness of the extent of homelessness among Oregon’s youngest children,” said Dona Bolt, state coordinator of the federal McKinney-Vento Program that provides funding and support for homeless student education. “While Head Start programs continue to broaden their enrollment of these most-in-need children, Oregon Child Care programs are also working to train 25,000 child care providers in the state about working with homeless families.”

While some of the largest school districts had the highest numbers of homeless students, the impact is also felt in rural areas. There are districts where 20 percent or more of their students count as homeless by the federal definition. This is due to a number of factors including unemployment, lack of family-wage jobs and not enough affordable housing in rural areas.

“We know that students dealing with difficult life circumstances have a much harder time in the classroom,” said Deputy Superintendent Salam Noor. “Our goal is to make the school environment as stable as possible for homeless students through the hard work of school district homeless liaisons and their partners, who provide direct services to homeless families and youths in communities throughout the state.”

Oregon received $613,967 in federal McKinney-Vento Act funds in 2015-16 to serve homeless students. More than 75 percent of this amount went to districts in the form of competitive sub-grants. The money helps offset the costs of school transportation and other services for homeless students.

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