

Good [morning/afternoon],

Every day, I work with youth and young adults ages 18 to 24 who are experiencing homelessness. These young people are trying to build their futures—finishing school, finding jobs, and learning the life skills needed to live independently—but one major barrier stands in their way: safe, stable housing.

As a Housing Navigator, I guide them through the process of finding and maintaining housing. But the reality is, there simply aren't enough affordable units. Many of the young people I work with are up against additional barriers—no rental history, no credit, and often no family support to fall back on.

And so they wait.

They wait for an opening, for an opportunity, for someone to say yes.

Programs like the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program help bridge that gap. They provide critical support, resources, and real pathways out of homelessness. But the need continues to grow, and the resources are not keeping up.

I've seen what happens when a young person finally gets the keys to their own place. It's not just housing—it's stability. It's dignity. It's the foundation they need to move forward with their lives.

If we truly believe that every young person deserves a safe place to call home, then we must continue to invest in the programs and supports that make that possible.

Thank you.

Star Barden, HN

Northeast Kingdom Youth Services