

## **House Committee on Human Services and Housing**

March 25, 2013

Madam Chair, Members of the Committee, my name is Rachel Post and I am the Public Policy Advisor at Central City Concern in Portland where we provide comprehensive solutions to ending homelessness and achieving self-sufficiency.

I submit this written testimony to convey Central City Concern's support of HB 3332 which would require the Oregon Health Authority to seek out and apply for funding for and appropriate moneys from General Fund to pay for crisis intervention services and residential care for individuals with mental illness. Each year, Central City Concern serves an estimated 13,000 individuals through our continuum of integrated primary and behavioral health care, supported and affordable housing and income acquisition programming. We understand all too well the impact that housing has on promoting the health and well-being of those experiencing behavioral health conditions, including mental illness and substance use disorders. Sadly, when inadequately treated, these conditions often result in its victims living in extreme poverty and homelessness. Evidence based practices such as supported housing can significantly reduce the utilization of high cost emergency services such as emergency rooms, inpatient bed stays, detoxification units, jail and prisons. For over 20 years Central City Concern has effectively used supported housing to promote ongoing recovery and community integration for those diagnosed with mental illness, co-occurring substance use disorders and those recovering simply from primary substance use disorders.

The need for supported housing is at an all time high given the disinvestment in federal funding to Housing and Urban Development over the past several decades. This disinvestment will continue through the Sequester with area Housing Authorities recently receiving notification of additional cuts as recently as earlier this month.

Just last year, Central City Concern conducted a Tri-County Supported Housing and Supported Services Needs Assessment at the request of Care Oregon, in the Portland metro area and concluded that an additional 3,760 units of supported affordable housing are needed to meet the needs of those with the greatest vulnerabilities; individuals and families living in extreme poverty and homelessness and effected by mental illnesses and substance use disorders. The assessment included interviews with 38 different partner organizations including the area community mental health and substance treatment providers, county mental health and substance use treatment authorities, community health clinics and area housing authorities.

HB 3332 will provide a portion of the necessary funding required to develop additional supported affordable housing for Oregonians with some of the greatest vulnerabilities and will assist the Coordinated Care Organizations in meeting the triple aim objectives required to succeed in healthcare transformation.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Rachel Post, L.C.S.W.

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