

**Comments on House Bill 3332**  
**Kenneth Milner of Washington County**  
**March 25, 2013**  
**Human Services and Housing Committee**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of House Bill 3332 for the Creation of Housing Development Fund.

I was attending college in the late 80's working towards a degree in social work, when I was first diagnosed with Bipolar and Major Depression. I was attending school full time and working part time, and renting a room when my first episode hit. My life imploded. I had no will, no motivation. I quit school, lost my job, and my place to live. All I had left was my car and my clothes. My father drove across many states to come and get me and take me back home. This started a pattern that was to be repeated many times over the next 20 years.

In 2000, I was living out of my car and ate raw potatoes and fruit for more than 3 weeks. I would go to the library to use the internet to try to find a place to live and help. I found Sequoia (then called Homestreet). They had a program for homeless adult males living with mental illness. I lived in a group home for one year. I received case management and treatment through them. I was able to find a job. My case manager started paperwork for shelter plus care and after a year, I was able to get into that program.

I started looking for my own apartment and found a flyer for co-housing with Trillium Co-op.

I got approved and was able to move into my own home, but it wasn't just a place to live, it was a community where I could be seen and heard; there were people that I could share a meal with. There were opportunities to volunteer and share in the community. I could no longer hide. I was in a safe, dependable, reliable, mature environment. My self-esteem grew. My confidence grew and I was able to develop a natural support network. I was able to come to terms with being a trauma victim, and came to the understanding that I am a survivor.

**Because of the housing help that I received, I was able to seek out therapy, and get connected.**

I eventually got a better job. I have now been employed there for four years. I have been volunteering for two years as a para professional. I am a Peer Advocate and Support Group Facilitator, and now have plans to become a Family 2 Family teacher for NAMI. I plan on returning to college in the Fall to complete my degree in Social Work. I am paying attention to my physical health, and have even starting dating. I feel like I am a member of society and I have things in life that are meaningful. I feel safe and secure.

**Having housing and treatment has been key to that.**

I have found a solid footing, have overcome the devastation of depression, and was able to find my way out of dysfunction.