

Comments on development of a special fund for housing for individuals with mental illness
David Forquer of Washington County
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Senate Health Care Committee

My name is David Forquer. I am here today to share my story with you and ask you to support the development of a special fund for housing for individuals with mental illness.

I was in the foster care system as a ward of the court from January 2007 to December 2012. During that time I spent about five years in residential treatment two years of which was in a locked facility. My last stay in residential treatment led to my ability to seek my own apartment using the subsidy housing funds from the state. I found an apartment online and began moving towards becoming an independent adult.

Although DHS was still a part of my life for the first six months of living independently, I was free to fully immerse myself in:

- Advocacy for youth and young adults living with mental illness, former and current foster youth and homeless youth and young adults;
- Attending Portland Community College, with a 3.61 grade point average;
- Transitioning to being an adult and actively participating in my community.

Becoming involved in these things, I started to become successful and I wanted to help others become successful as well. I had a plan, more than enough motivation, more friends than I ever had in my life, and I was becoming a person that I finally found acceptance of myself that had been long forgotten during my attempts to battle some of my own challenges.

As with all young adults transiting to being independent, problems started surfacing due to limited financial means and limited community support. These challenges and dealing with other challenges associated with adulthood, lead to my having to stop some of my advocacy. Eventually had to drop all my the classes at Portland Community College because I was overwhelmed and depressed. Once I dropped out of school, I lost my housing subsidy funding because I was not a full time student nor had a full time job.

I went from a successful young adult to having no money, food, and ultimately homeless. I could not get food assistance or disability because I did not have an address or phone number. During this time I experienced a lot of trauma. I did not feel confident or independent. I wanted to work my way back to where I was and start working towards my goals again but I wasn't sure where to begin. I was struggling with homeless and, due to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, I experienced the inability to even meet my basic needs. Not having a home is physically taxing in a way that I could never have understood beforehand

Eventually, I was able to connect to an organization that provided me with assistance with resources and I was able to begin putting my life back together. Because of this support, I was able to get food stamps and stable housing. *Because having stable housing I am working to re-enroll in school and begin helping my community through advocacy again.* I am a young adult with motivation, intelligence and a lot to offer others. I live with mental illness but that does not limit the greatness I can achieve. *In order to achieve my goals, all roads lead having one of the most basic needs met- housing.*

There are many members of my community and other communities that can have a quality of life beyond what others understand and expect. That is why we need to have a safe dry place in order to begin our journey to achieve our dreams. **I am asking you to support the development of a special fund for housing for individuals with mental illness; for individuals like me.**

Thank you for listening to my story.