

Senate Committee On Veterans and Emergency Preparedness 2/28/2013

Public Testimony prepared by: Rachel Post, L.C.S.W., Public Policy Advisor, Central City Concern

Subject: HB 2417

Good Afternoon Chair Boquist, Vice-Chair Monnes-Anderson and members of the Committee. My name is Rachel Post and I am a licensed clinical social worker and the Public Policy Advisor at Central City Concern in Portland. Additionally I am certified as a Subject Matter Expert in the area of Supportive Housing by the National Health Care for the Homeless Council and have designed, supervised and evaluated supported housing programming for those exiting homelessness, including veterans for over 10 years prior to my current position. Central City Concern has been providing comprehensive solutions to ending homelessness and achieving self-sufficiency since 1979. We serve 13,000 individuals a year through our integrated health care, affordable and supported housing, positive peer relationships and acquisition of legitimate income. People we serve come from all parts of the state of Oregon.

Our organization serves over 800 veterans exiting homelessness at any given time. Though we serve veterans through every part of our agency, we receive veteran specific funding from the Department of Labor to provide homeless veterans assistance in securing employment through our Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program and we provide 72 units of supported housing through funding from the Department of Veterans Affairs Grant Per Diem Program.

We know that having a safe, stable place to call home is the first step for people to move forward with their lives.

People with mental health challenges, physical disabilities, or substance use issues need a safe place to call home to make progress in removing barriers from their life. Veterans often experience the additional obstacles of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injuries and Military Sexual Trauma.

Supported housing is an innovative and proven solution to some of communities' toughest problems. It combines affordable housing with services that help people who face the most complex challenges to live with stability, autonomy and dignity.

Supportive housing helps build strong, healthy communities by improving the safety of neighborhoods, beautifying city blocks with new or rehabilitated properties, and increasing or stabilizing property values over time.

Supportive housing improves housing stability, employment, mental and physical health, and school attendance; and reduces active substance use. People in supportive housing live more stable and productive lives.

*I'd like to end with this quote from the U.S. Army Ranger Creed which states:*

*"I will never leave a fallen comrade to fall into the hands of the enemy..."*

Homelessness, unemployment and poverty are the enemies of our returning veterans. Please support HB 2417 so that we can do better at ending and preventing these social ills. Thank you.