

**In the words of advocates and survivors.....**  
**Access to Affordable Housing is Critical for Survivors and their Children**  
**Please Support HB 2198**  
**Affordable Family Housing Development Program**

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*"My last abuse ended with 3 broken ribs and 2 black eyes. I was alone, scared and hopeless, yet to go back [to my abuser] was out of the question. Someone gave me a make-shift tent that I lived in for about a year due to not being able to find suitable housing. It was another 2 years before I was able to gain housing ....."* -**Sandra Hamrick, Women's Safety & Resource Center in Coos Bay, OR**

*"I have worked with several families that have worked hard to start new and safe lives but have been blocked from doing so because of the lack of affordable housing. This truly has become a crisis..... Something needs to be done. Many of the people that I work with can't leave their abusive situations or have ended up going to back to their abusers, end up going to homeless shelters or less-than-safe situations because they have no other choice. Children are bounced from place to place and never know what to expect the next day. This is not only scary for them but it causes delays, disruptions and other consequences that affect them now and later in life which will then affect our community. This is not an individual or personal issue - the housing crisis is a community issue."* - **Ely Blackwood, Bilingual Children's/Women's Advocate, Saving Grace serving Crook, Jefferson, and Deschutes Counties.**

*"I am writing on behalf of domestic and sexual violence survivors in Deschutes, Crook and Jefferson counties .....We currently have multiple victims and children living in unstable, unsafe situations, including sleeping in their cars, living in travel trailers without plumbing far from any viable transportation, and several who are working at two and three jobs but literally cannot find any affordable housing and so are having to stay at motels, an expensive option that rapidly is eating up the hard-earned savings they had put aside to pay for a security deposit and rent."* - **Gail Bartley, Program Manager, Mary's Place Supervised Visitation & Safe Exchange Center (a program of Saving Grace) Bend, OR**

*"Our biggest problem in my community is emergency and affordable housing. An Advocate's top priority is safety and to empower a victim on the road to self sufficiency. How can we do that without needed resources? I have had to deny many victims housing because of our shelter being full due to the process of getting our shelter clients into affordable housing. At this point, I think to myself, am I really helping them? We do extensive advocacy with these victims and then have to put them on the streets or have them go back to their abuser. -* **Katie E. Kahn, DHS Co-Located Advocate/Assistant Shelter Manager, Harney Helping Organization for Personal Emergencies (H.O.P.E)Burns, Oregon**

*"This housing crisis is so extremely hard on everyone. I have never seen advocates so sad over a situation like the lack of housing. Monday we responded once again to a survivor who had been raped in a homeless camp.Thank you for all your work on this."*- **Laurie Brisby, Saving Grace, Bend, OR (serving Crook, Jefferson, Deschutes counties)**

*"In my experience working with victims, the most important factor for creating a safe and stable life for themselves and their children is stable housing. Many people identify the fear of homelessness as a barrier to leaving an abusive relationship. CARDV's shelter is often full and victims are forced to look for other options which may not be safe. People face a sobering lack of housing resources available after emergency shelter."* - **Cybil Stockman, Residential Services Manager, Center Against Rape and Domestic Violence (CARDV) serving Linn and Benton counties.**

*"I am a survivor attempting to survive without enough resources, every day is a constant struggle I am currently employed but I do not make enough money to pay my bills leaving necessities almost impossible to get. I am a single mother of three boys I work hard to provide for them and always put my best foot forward but I find myself in a hopeless place never able to keep up with the bills cringing on the inside when my children need extra money for school functions, sometimes having to choose between taking my child to the doctor and paying a bill. I recently lost three weeks of work and was not able to pay my rent this month I am terrified of being evicted and don't know what to do I have literally had to stop myself from reaching out to my abuser who told me for so many years that I could never make it without him....thankfully I have not done that. Affordable housing to me, would mean I wouldn't have to be afraid anymore, it would mean my children would have the necessities that they need and the extras...like right now my youngest needs to go 35 miles away for the district spelling bee and my oldest needs to be over 70 miles away to compete with the mathletes and as proud as I am on the inside I know this will be a choice between a bill and investing in their futures. There is no possible way I could form words that could express the need for permanent affordable housing and the futures it would impact."*  
- **Catherine Fulton, Illinois Valley Safe House Alliance**

*"I am a survivor and understand firsthand how important support is in regards to housing for our survivors. I work with survivors in Eugene, Springfield, Junction City, and Cottage Grove."*  
- **Myka Bitterman, Bilingual Intimate Partner Violence Specialist, Womenspace, Inc. Eugene OR**

*"I am writing to express my extreme concern about the lack of available housing in Central Oregon. It should be alarming to every person doing business in this area that this scarcity includes "work force" housing, but as someone working in an agency providing services to women and children victimized by domestic violence, I see the heartbreaking effects of a lack of low income housing in this area almost every day!.....As women and their children contemplate safely leaving an abusive situation (with known impacts to the developing brains of children and devastating costs to adult victims) this calculation must include a way to meet basic needs. Viable alternatives are sorely lacking in our community. In Central Oregon, it can fairly be said that too often "no way out" is their reality."* - **Connie Peterson, Supervised Visitation and Exchange Facilitator - Mary's Place (a program of Saving Grace), Bend, OR**

*"Housing for our participants is vital because we are a college town and our lack of affordable housing is extremely high. When new housing opens, the college increases its population of students, so there is never enough housing for other families or non-college single people in the community."* - **Donna Mayotte, Transitional Services Manager, Womenspace Inc., Eugene OR**

*"I work with children who witness domestic violence all too often in their homes through primary prevention workshops in elementary schools. It breaks my heart when we receive a new report that a child has been a witness to domestic violence, or has experienced physical or mental abuse themselves, particularly knowing that access to housing and food can become such a huge barrier once they're able to leave the harmful situations they're in. We can not expect families to break these cycles of harm when the alternative is homelessness."* - **Kate Blackmore - Program Supervisor - Communities for Safe Kids, Impact NW - Serving Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington Counties.**

*"Recently I had a victim come to my office in desperate need of housing for her and her 6 kids. When I told her about the length of the waiting list and the price of other rentals, she knew instantly that she couldn't make it work. She had to make the difficult choice between returning to her abuser or being homeless. Victims of domestic violence should never have to make this choice."* - **Caitlin von Gaertner, Central Oregon**

*"In Jackson County there is a 1% vacancy rate, and survivors struggling with numerous barriers are left with no choice but to go back to unsafe living arrangement. You can help us change the lives of so many whose voices are not heard. Thank you for considering this critical and epidemic problem."* - **Barbara Johnson, Community Works, Jackson County, OR**

*"The Gateway Center is a Family Justice Center in Multnomah County. We are a walk in drop in center offering a wide variety of services for survivors of domestic violence and their children. We average 30 survivors here a day. Safe shelter and housing are keys to breaking the cycle of violence. When victims have safety and stability, they can begin to rebuild their lives and the lives of their children."* - **Martha Strawn-Morris, Director, The Gateway Center for Domestic Violence Services, Multnomah County.**

*"...I have 1 of only 15 supportive housing spots designated for survivors of domestic violence in Portland. Receiving this housing spot has given myself and my children our new start. A chance to rebuild the relationship I had with my children. Get extensive counseling and support for my kids and I, continue to get my feet firmly on the ground. The opportunity to go back to school, the chance for my family to be safe again, the chance to break the cycle of violence in my family and to teach my children what love in family is all about. I came to shelter feeling like a victim but I left shelter with a housing grant to start over and knowing I was a survivor."* -- **Survivor with 4 children, Portland, OR**

*"...We are in an extremely rural region. Apartments are few and far between...My clients call and call and travel 20-40 miles for housing opportunities that in many cases dry up. Shelters are full, transitional housing forces relocation, and wait-lists while living in tents or out of cars...I was there myself, I was lucky, but would I have left had I known homelessness would be my life for 1, 2, 6 months?"* -- **Survivor, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde**