

To: NAMI Oregon

From: Jeff Reed

Subject: House Bill 3063

In July of 2013 we entered into an agreement with Yamhill County Mental Health on providing housing for up to 3 men with mental health problems. We took our rental house which is a 3 bedroom one bath facility and dedicated it for this purpose. The home is rented out on a per bedroom basis. Yamhill County qualifies the men to make sure they are likely to be compatible then the men sign a separate rental agreement. Basically, I charge the Yamhill County a flat rate for the rooms, the men pay what Yamhill County determines they can afford then the county pays me the difference. As landlord, I pay all utilities, maintenance and landscaping. All tenants are on a month to month agreement.

While there have been some issues along the way, all things considered it has been a success. Looking back, I would change nothing. I would like to explain some of the benefits of having people with mental illness live independently in suitable housing.

First let me state that for people that struggle with mental illness living alone is practically a death sentence. Having other people around helps to make them feel normal. Our home provides an environment in which they live with people with similar struggles to their own. However, they are in a place of refuge in which no one judges them. There is no one there to condemn or mock them. We (myself and Yamhill County) do our best to make sure they have a safe and respectful home. One that is drug and alcohol free.

For some of these men it is their first true home. They have not been able to support themselves for independent living, they have been on the streets, jail or living with different family members. Having a place to call home, and an address has a tremendous impact on their wellbeing. One of the men has reestablished relationships with his family and is doing well enough where he no longer requires the services of a social worker. For each of them it provides a stability in their lives they may have never had. We don't put a time limit on how long they can stay. It is more important they feel like they have a home.

Having this stability plays an important role in overcoming some of the daily challenges of living with mental illness. Not having to worry about where you will sleep, if you will be warm enough, if you will get a shower, have the opportunity to wash their clothes, not having to be alone. When those things that they have been worrying about for years are settled they can

start rebuilding their lives, trying to find that sense of being normal, functional and less dependent of others.

Many people don't understand why people (especially young men and women) with mental disabilities just can't live at home or with a relative. Having an adult son with Bi Polar disorder I could write a book on the impact this has on a family. Having them at home can be a complete disruption. You never know what or who you are coming home to, what shape the house will be in. Threats mean nothing. They would rather live with the consequences of making bad choices than make changes. Much of this behavior is driven from self-worth that is absolutely on the bottom. That can lead to them not taking their medication which leads to other problems, it is just a viscous circle in which you don't know where it starts or stops. House isn't the total fix but it can have a significant impact on a true beginning. It also gives the caretaking family some time and space to re-evaluate what they need to do and what they are capable of doing.

There have been several occasions when people have stopped by while I was working at the house and asked me if there were any openings. I have also had several phone calls in reference to openings. There is clearly a huge need for this type of housing.

All this information can be verified through Yamhill County Mental Health.

So how does this all tie into the funding question? By providing a group type setting the cost of housing per person is significantly reduced. In our situation, the home is paid for so I don't have to squeeze every penny out of it. However, if funding could be made available to help other landlords with the same model the cost per person would be considerably less than individual housing or even section 8 vouchers.

Lastly attached is a link to a KGW article that was written about our home and some of the impact it has on people with mental illness.

<http://www.kgw.com/news/investigations/is-this-a-new-model-for-affordable-housing/370124739>.

Thank you for your time and please support House Bill 3063.