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We believe that everyone deserves to live a life free from violence.

March 20, 2020

Dear Co-Chair Roblan, Co-Chair Holvey, and members of the Joint Special Coronavirus Response Committee,

For more than 40 years, Raphael House has helped survivors of domestic violence find the safety, hope, and independence they deserve. Since opening our doors in 1977, we have provided uninterrupted access to emergency shelter in a confidential location. In addition to shelter, we also operate a 24-hour hotline, a robust Prevention Education program in local schools, wraparound housing assistance, and ongoing supportive services that promote families' long-term safety and stability. During this new crisis, we are intent on remaining a safe haven from domestic violence and continuing to provide ongoing resources and support to the 400+ survivors who rely on us each year.

During this national emergency, Raphael House is housing 31 survivors—11 adults and 20 children, most of whom are under the age of 8—in our emergency shelter. These individuals are at our confidential location as they escape dangerous abusers. At this time, we are asking residents to stay in their assigned rooms, eat in their rooms, and maintain social distancing in order to prevent potential spread of COVID-19. This puts a remarkable strain on parents, creating further stress for survivors who are rebuilding their lives. Housing so many families in congregate spaces, in any circumstance, creates a ripe environment for illness to spread but we are working to mitigate the spread as much as possible through encouraging social distancing, constantly cleaning and disinfecting surfaces, and continuing to help families implement their plans for next steps.

Raphael House usually has enough staff to meet the needs of our shelter participants, but in the face of the current crisis, our staff capacity is significantly diminished – due to personal illness, childcare challenges caused by school closures, or self-quarantining. We are committed to offering paid emergency leave to staff who are unable to work during this crisis, and we do not want to furlough or lay off anyone, particularly now. At the same time, our monthly donors have ended their contributions; our Gala fundraising has slowed; and we will lose an estimated \$34,000 in revenue due to cancelled community fundraising activities. At a time when survivors' needs are greater than ever, this loss in funding will be deeply felt across our agency.

In addition to our emergency shelter, our ongoing services have become a vital source of both long-term support and crisis intervention to families throughout Multnomah County. More than 350 survivors rely on us each year for emergency assistance (such as food boxes, basic needs items, and eviction prevention support) as well as case management, support groups, housing assistance, and more. These services play a vital role in helping families maintain stability after they exit our shelter; in fact, 92% of participants in this wraparound programming have

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successfully sustained their safe, stable housing. As always, we are committed to finding ways to continue supporting families throughout this crisis and prevent destabilization.

We urgently seek support to address the following critical needs:

- 1) Proactive, confidential COVID-19 testing that is coupled with responsive resources to lodge families in motels if they test positive.
- 2) Additional motel lodging for current shelter residents and/or any new survivors who require emergency shelter. Motel stays would mitigate the increased health risk associated with congregate living, allowing us to continue to provide life-saving resources without endangering multiple staff and vulnerable families.
- 3) Investment in our ongoing, supportive services so we can rise to meet the increased needs of survivor families community-wide in the fallout of COVID-19.
- 4) Financial support for our dedicated, mission-driven employees whose ability to work is limited by this crisis. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act provides some relief, but more is needed to support and retain trained experts in domestic violence.

Thank you for creating the Joint Committee on Coronavirus to address the expansive impacts of this pandemic. Having leadership exhibiting critical thinking, strategic planning, and connection to one another give us the stamina to continue to do the same for our communities.

Sincerely,

Raphael House Board of Directors



Nicole Frisch
Board President



AJ Ijaz
Board Vice President



Michelle Erickson
Board Treasurer



Courtney Lee
Board Secretary