

To: Chair Fagan, Vice Chair Girod, Members of the Committee

1/31/2019

My name is Ellen Ontario. I'm an Oregon Certified Domestic Violence Advocate providing volunteer peer support services to clients of **Turning Point Program**, a new exempt (property development) Portland-based non-profit (DOJ charity # 54911) that uses the economics of multi-family housing to offer 24-month grant residency to families fleeing or recovering from domestic violence. Turning Point Program is a member of the Housing Alliance.

I'm writing concerning Bill SB 608, from the point of view of a domestic violence survivor.

Even with the advent and funding of county DV centers to facilitate protective orders and emergency food and health services, the safety-status of Oregon women has become worse: Oregon now taking 2nd place of the *least safe state for survivors*, "*Most Dangerous States for Women*" using the Women's Sexual Safety Index in October 2018. <https://securitybaron.com/blog/most-dangerous-states-for-womens-sexual-safety/>

There are many factors that work together to create this statistic. The top factor is still **lack of safe housing /shelters for survivors and children**. Domestic Violence is the THIRD leading cause of homelessness for women and children. https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/domestic-abuse-survivors-homelessness_us_569529a1e4b09dbb4baca4a0

Of all populations, those who are separating from abusers need a safe and stable place to call home. Some, like me, called police only to find that because my abuser had not hit me, he couldn't be removed! Imagine what might have happened if my landlord had seen this scene and simply decided that he didn't want to let me stay.

In this horrifying position, many survivors of domestic violence aren't yet capable of talking to people and if landlords exercised their option and chose to give survivors notice of lease-termination, the survivors can be driven by necessity *back to their abusers*. There just isn't any where else for them to go.

I got lucky; my landlord chose to help: He made a new lease in my name only. My LANDLORD, not the police or the courts, gave me the very first protection our family received. We are now three years "old" as survivors, getting stronger and more secure in every way every day. But it all started with home. Now, women and children come to my home weekly, if their domestic violence (without housing options) translated into post-separation abuses. We work together and try to find floors of strangers, which is better than nothing.

The plight of survivors is so precarious, that one more point of insecurity is harmful not just to the survivor but to the future of each child. Children have trouble concentrating in school if they are facing just one point of major instability. As a mother, I did all that I could to shield my children from any awareness of what was occurring where they could not see it. Imagine if a child's mind is subject to the stress of existential terror of being homeless in addition to having a parent in mental and emotional trauma similar to a concussion. These stresses on children **should** be impossible in this wealthy, first-world country.

Renters depend on our lawmakers to think of our welfare, as we renters are often just lucky to have a lease. No one in the position of 'renter' gets to advocate for themselves. We renters need your protection to be stable in our homes when the tables turn in our lives in ways we did not expect or imagine. Luck shouldn't play the role of choosing which children experience stability and which do not.

Please vote YES to support SB 608.

Thank you for your attention to this issue. Putting in the time to imagine all the ways each proposal might impact our communities is a very hard job and I am grateful to all of you.

Thank you,

Ellen Ontario