



**PARTNERSHIP FOR
SAFETY & JUSTICE**

**Submitted to the Senate Housing Committee
Monday, February 4, 2019**

Testimony in Support of SB 608

By Amy Davidson, Crime Survivor Program Director, Partnership for Safety and Justice

Chair Fagan, Vice-Chair Girod, and members of the committee,

My name is Amy Davidson, and I'm the Crime Survivor Program Director at Partnership for Safety and Justice. Partnership for Safety and Justice is a statewide, non-profit organization that advocates for public safety and criminal justice policies. For nearly 20 years, our work has advanced state and local solutions that ensure accountability, equity, and healing for people convicted of crime, crime survivors, and the families and communities of both.

The state's lack of affordable or stable housing has a dramatic impact on survivors of crime and people with convictions, particularly those who are people of color. That's why, on behalf of Partnership for Safety and Justice, I respectfully request your support for SB 608, which would provide critical protections against no-cause evictions and extreme rent increases for the 40% of Oregon households who rent their homes.

Across the state, too many survivors of intimate partner violence experience eviction for simply calling law enforcement on their abusive partners. Many survivors choose to stay with their abusers to avoid the perils of homelessness. Other crime survivors will make the difficult choice of staying in unsafe living situations where drug abuse and other unsafe living conditions are present each day, putting themselves and their children at risk.

After 15 years of serving hundreds of victims and survivors, I have zero reservation in telling you that safe and stable housing is the most emergent and essential need for survivors. I witnessed my clients resorting to living in cars and under tarps with their children, but they were often especially vulnerable during central Oregon's fierce winter months. To protect themselves from the cold, their housing vulnerability was exploited by "friends" who offered shelter to women and their children, and later coerced the women into performing sexual acts in exchange.

Housing stability improves outcomes for survivors of crime. It allows survivors to find safety, heal from their trauma, nurture their families, access services, and rebuild their lives.

Similarly, stable, affordable housing is also one of the most important factors for successful reentry for people who have been justice-involved. With a reliable place to call home, people returning from prison face one less barrier along the path of a system that expects accountability but offers limited access to viable avenues for change.

For someone seeking to get their life on track after incarceration, a stable home is key. It allows for more reliable access to local services, an address to write on job applications, and a stronger community bond in which to grow roots – all of which can reduce recidivism and help people succeed.

Everyone deserves a stable place to call home, but more than that, secure housing is a matter of basic public safety. We urge your support of SB 608.