

January 29, 2019

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

*Dear State Representatives:*

*My name is Jeff D. Riddle and I am the Income Development Manager at Transition Projects and local Portland resident. Here at Transition Projects we focus on assisting folks end their homelessness and help them obtain housing. We are in the downtown area and have been operational since 1969. This year we are in our 50<sup>th</sup> year of service to those experiencing homelessness. This letter is to offer my testimony for tenant protection. I will be offering my testimony from two point of views. Those are from a professional stand point and my own personal experience while in my role with the agency.*

*I would like to first, thank you for taking the time to read my statement and others that have submit them. All too often do we think of someone receiving these letters and actually reading them. If you're reading this, know that it is more than appreciated.*

*While working at Transition Projects I've had the liberty to cross many individual paths. Those people range from mothers to fathers, sons and daughters, and even very high end professionals who have had something disastrous happen to place them in a situation where they need to access services with us. They could be due to medical issues, mental health, drug or alcohol addiction and multiple other things. All too often I hear stories that I personally can relate to and watch these people grovel in my office because they seem to not know which end is up and they are being worn down by the constant struggles they face. Housing being one major one. The hard workers that I continue to see, fight. They fight with all they have left and they feel destroyed because they seem not to be able to wade water and are barely surviving as it is. One thing that I have researched is that for people who have housing, moving is a top stressor. Imagine this as a person who is experiencing homelessness. They move all the time. The level of stress they have to endure is insane. Functioning with such high levels of stress will eventually create a breaking point for someone and they are then potential disaster could happen. That disaster could be drug use, risky behavior or even suicide.*

*My time here has been memorable and continues to be. I appreciate the lives that I have touched and honored to continue to do so. I have been with the agency for about 6 years and one thing that is constant is the lack of affordable housing and the means for them to access it. I have also known for individuals, like myself, to be rent burden. Paying upwards of 50% of my income to pay rent and stuck in such a rut that they can't even consider moving because they will have to pay more so they tolerate being in an apartment that needs maintenance but afraid to say something because they may be evicted. I personally have been one of those individuals.*

*During my time with Transition Projects I actually came close to experiencing homelessness again. This time it wasn't due to any fault of my own. The owner of the home decided that they wanted the property and home back after seeing the appraisal that happened after we had improved the property. This left my family of 7, and myself, to make decisions that we didn't want to do. We moved into a property that had been formerly rented by individuals who had been heavy drug users and been evicted. The property had been trashed but we accepted the property because we needed something quick to prevent our children from being victims of*





homelessness. All due to a no cause eviction. The place I rent from currently has raised the rent to \$2100 dollars from \$1950 and was originally considered to be \$1650 for rent reasonable. Obviously this is a big difference when it comes to pricing.

I now am working on purchasing a home because I will no longer have to deal with landlords gouging me for my hard earned money. I will begin to create equity for myself and most importantly, a home for my children to be in where they will feel safe and not have to worry about where they will sleep or eat. There have been studies that have mentioned the importance of having stability growing up because it impacts how well kids do in school. From my own experience, I moved around a lot as a kid and I assume it was because of similar reasons. Affordability. This will not happen to my children as it had for me.

The impact that the housing crisis has been on the communities is terrible. Organizations seem to be stretched due to the overwhelming amount of people who are now accessing services. Children under 18 years of age included, 55 and older adults, veterans, people with disabilities, and the list goes on. This is when we should ask where are we failing as a community to assist the most vulnerable of our population. When do we start to look at what's happening to those people and how the stress they endure is also something we endure. Community has always been something I was raised to appreciate, assisting those that needed a little help to get back to living. Sometimes that means we start at the core of the problem so people can focus on the important things in life. That means getting them into housing so they can start to take care of the mental health they are struggling with, or assisting that veteran into housing so he can cope with the trauma they have endured in war, getting that kid connected with their parents so they can be a family again and start to work on the relationship issues that stemmed from the homelessness they experienced, or simply assisting someone into having a safe place to call home. Because who wouldn't want to do that? Who doesn't need a place to decompress from the issues of society so they can process a plan to move forward in an efficient manner? I think we all do. Everyone deserves a place to do all of those things.

I'm asking you to please vote yes on SB 608 to assist in moving this process. People are depending on our leaders in office to provide basic protection and stability to those that need it. As a member of the community I know that I will continue to help those that are less fortunate because this is what I was taught to do. The end goal of mine is to be out of a job and to move into another career. When this happens and the person I sit in front of asks why I'm no longer in the field of work, I will tell them it was because I completed the job and there are no more people experiencing homelessness. Everyone is nestled in affordable housing or has a home.

Thank you again for taking the time to read my letter. You are appreciated amongst all of us. I wish you well in all your endeavors.

Sincerely,

Jeff D. Riddle, CRM, PSS



