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

Date: March 27, 2019
To: Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development
Attention: Co-Chair Manning, Co-Chair Gomberg, and Members of the Committee

I serve as the Shelter & Housing Services Manager at Raphael House of Portland and am writing to support SB 5512.

At Raphael House we believe that everyone deserves to live a life free from violence. Our mission is to engage our entire community in non-violent living through advocacy, education, and community outreach, and by providing a safe haven from domestic violence here in Multnomah County. Raphael House proudly serves anyone impacted by domestic violence regardless of gender identity, ethnicity, disability, immigration status, primary language, or sexuality. When a survivor comes through our doors we offer intensive case management including robust economic empowerment and housing supports. We know that without a safe and stable home for survivors and their families to live in, the chance that they will return to unsafe homes is much higher.

It is critical that we help ensure everyone has a safe place to call home. And by investing in housing opportunities, we can create an Oregon with a better future for all of us – where everyone has access to a stable, affordable home that's free from violence and abuse.

Currently an Oregonian making minimum wage would need to work 93 hours each week to afford a two-bedroom apartment. This is all the more challenging for survivors fleeing domestic violence with their children, many of whom have faced years of financial abuse, including being forced to stay out of the employment market. In fact, access to affordable housing remains one of the greatest barriers to survivors achieving long-term safety, stability, and independence.

For this reason, I am strongly advocating for additional resources to support preventing or ending homelessness through investments in the Emergency Housing Account (EHA) and State Homeless Assistance Program (SHAP). Both of these enable us to move survivors out of unsafe homes into shelter or a motel, to relocate them, or to help pay rent at a new and safer home. These supports are both life-saving and life-changing for families fleeing abuse.

I am also advocating for the Domestic Violence Housing Navigator program. This program would provide the necessary staffing to ensure that more advocates are available to support survivors with safety planning and increasing overall housing stability.

I have been working with survivors for nearly a decade, and for the past nine years, my focus has been specifically on shelter and housing. From this experience, I know that if survivors do not have access to safe and stable housing – if their most basic needs aren't being met – it's hard to accomplish anything else. If our community had more EHA and SHAP funds, we could help even more survivors achieve the long-term safety and stability they deserve. This includes many youth, who are the vast majority of people we serve here at Raphael House.

We know that no matter who manages these EHA and SHAP funds, they directly benefit survivors across our state. Our domestic violence shelters are always full, and with additional resources in the community, survivors could more quickly move out of temporary shelters into safe and permanent housing. Housing Navigator funds would greatly increase our community's capacity to serve more survivors, and in a trauma-informed and effective way, with necessary expertise in safety planning and economic empowerment that is specific to the needs of domestic violence survivors.

For all these reasons and more, I am asking for your support of SB 5512 with \$50 million in on-going funds for the Emergency Housing Account and State Homeless Assistance Program, and \$5 million for the Domestic Violence Housing Navigator Program. I know that this will have a profound and lasting impact on survivors who desperately want to leave abusive homes and violence, but see few options to do so. These funds and this program would allow survivors to take that next step into a future free of violence, and begin building lives without abuse for themselves and for their children.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and service.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christina McGovney".

Christina McGovney

Shelter & Housing Service Manager

Raphael House of Portland

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