

April 11, 2019

To: Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction

From: Gabrielle Guedon, Executive Director, Oregon Self Advocacy Coalition

RE: HB 5005 Support to develop safe, stable and affordable rental housing

Co-Chair Girod, Co-Chair Holvey and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Self Advocacy Coalition (OSAC) is a statewide nonprofit organization made up of individual self-advocates and 18 local self-advocacy groups. We support people with intellectual or developmental disabilities to advocate in all aspects of their lives. Housing is important to us because it helps us be members of our community and have a safe place to call our own.

Communities are stronger when all people participate. All people have gifts that mix together in a community to make everyone stronger. People with disabilities are just like everyone else, they just may need different supports to succeed. It is important to have a community with people of different interests because we all lead our best lives together in community.

When people with disabilities find a home that works for them, we are more successful. Our support stabilizes when our home stabilizes. This allows us to find jobs and connect with our communities.

Rental housing is important to us because it allows us to live and work in the community in a place we can call our own. It is expensive to own a house and many people with disabilities rely on rental housing to live and work in their community. When a person finds housing that fits their needs, they can have a stronger support system, learn skills and be more independent.

Unfortunately, some of our members have experienced abusive situations. One of the major reasons they were able to get away from the abusive treatment was because they were able to get support to find affordable housing quickly. They credit affordable housing with saving their lives and would like to see more opportunities for affordable housing for future generations.

Affordable rental housing needs to be connected by location and transportation options to the greater community. Many of us rely on public transportation to go from our homes to our jobs and do what we need to do in our communities.

Without a connection to affordable rental housing, many people with disabilities are forced to live in foster care, group homes, with roommates or family members they do not prefer or risk becoming homeless. When people cannot move to a place they want, they feel stuck and unable to prove that they can do good things in their communities.

One of our members had been living in her apartment for thirty years with her son who also experiences a disability. She received a no cause eviction and was forced into a shelter because there are no apartments that are available in Medford. She was separated from her son, lived in a shelter for three months and recently found a room in a house to rent. Unfortunately, the situation does not allow her to be with her son. He now lives in foster care about ten miles out of town without access to a bus line.

Staff at Living Opportunities, a Developmental Disability service provider, have been trying to find her a new place where she can be reunited with her son and have a stable home.

Please support HB 5005 to build safe, affordable rental housing.