



Date: 2/4/2020

RE: In Support of House Bill 4067

Central City Concern (CCC) is a non-profit direct service organization that provides integrated primary and behavioral health care, supportive and affordable housing, and employment services to people impacted by homelessness in the Tri-County area. CCC operates about 2,200 units of affordable housing, serves 9,000 patients annually through our 13 Federally Qualified Health Centers, supports 1,200 job seekers annually and operates diversion and re-entry programs for the community justice programs in Multnomah and Clackamas counties. Within the workforce of our agency, 47% of our staff identify as being in recovery from substance use disorder and approximately 25% of our staff were once CCC clients (living in our housing, receiving health and employment services).

In the over two thousand units of housing we manage, residents have subsidized or below market rents that include utilities covered by us. Our housing is specifically designed to support individuals and families in recovery from homelessness, substance use disorder and other trauma related to experiences of extreme poverty. We provided supportive services to help people find a new sense of stability. While many people may live with us for the duration of their lives many more people come to our services as a stabilization and transitional component of their lives. In addition to providing health related services we also provide financial management training and employment services. Just under 70% of our clients who receive employment services are able to attain long-term stable employment.

We do our best to provide people with all the tools they will need when they are ready to move on from our services. In addition to facing the benefits cliff once they begin making more stable income, our former clients and residents also face new financial barriers including higher health care premiums and copays, garnishments from past debt and utility payments on top of market rents. These additional costs threaten their newly found financial stability. HB 4067 is attempting to open a pathway for the Public Utility Commission to consider how we can build better bridges for individuals and families who have successfully utilized other government funded programs to pull themselves out of homelessness. There are many support organizations like CCC that have been able to develop for when people are living in our housing and utilizing our services. However, we don't want to keep people stuck in our services, nor do they want to be cycling through services. Alleviating energy burden is one small step our communities could take to make sure all the great work people have done in social service programs does not get undone. Let's work together to build bridges for people so that their new found stability can truly lead to a permanent turn around.

Please vote YES to allow the public utility commission to investigate potential mitigation for energy bill reduction measure to support health and stability for low-income households.