

Central City Concern is a non-profit direct service organization that provides integrated primary and behavioral health care, supportive and affordable housing, employment services and reentry and diversion programs to people impacted by homelessness, poverty and complex health needs in the Tri-County area. Central City Concern operates about 2,200 units of affordable housing, serves 9,000 patients annually through our 13 Federally Qualified Health Centers, makes 1,200 job placements annually. **Our programs and properties span Senate Districts 17, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25; and House Districts 33,36,42,43,44,45,46,47,48 and 50.**

Below is a story of impact, rent assistance and stabilizing services are what is going to get our community through this pandemic. Extending the eviction moratorium creates the legal protections and time we need to support our community. Vote yes to invest in community, vote yes to support people like Celeste:

Celeste, a single mom to three, lives with her four-year-old son in Central City Concern's Hazel Heights residential building. She works in downtown Portland at the Maybelle Center, where she helps build community for those experiencing social isolation.

When her hours were cut at the beginning of Oregon's battle with COVID-19, Celeste wasn't sure how she'd pay her rent and keep up with other bills. She'd just recovered from an illness that had required her to take time off from work and caused her to miss a rent payment. And because Celeste works full time, she doesn't qualify for benefits like government food assistance. "I was already a month behind on rent and bills were piling up. I was just barely hanging on," she says.

Luckily, Celeste was able to access Rent Assistance Funds provided to CCC residents through grant funding and individual donations. She was able to pay what she owed and see a glimmer of hope. Without rental assistance, Celeste says that she imagines a very different outcome for herself and her family during the pandemic. "I would've thought, 'I'll never get out of this, so I might as well give up.'"

Celeste knows what it's like to give up on herself. When Celeste first came to CCC four years ago, she was pregnant and homeless, with an active addiction to methamphetamines and heroin. She spent months living at CCC's Letty Owings Center, a recovery home for mothers and pregnant women, while building life skills and receiving treatment for substance use disorder. Celeste has been steadily rebuilding her life ever since.

"It's really important for me and my recovery to make the right decisions and keep pushing forward," she says. Despite the instability and uncertainty of the pandemic, Celeste was able to hang on.

And so were Celeste's neighbors at Hazel Heights, where rent payments allow CCC to provide the kinds of integrated services our residents need to stay healthy and housed: from employment support and community building activities to the onsite recovery meetings that Celeste often attends at the end of a long workday.

Celeste's hours at the Maybelle Center are still less than they were before COVID-19, but she is making it work. Her job is important to her, and staying connected to her clients feels even more critical than before. "Sometimes, clients are just sitting there waiting for calls from me. I'm the only person they're in contact with all day, and they're just waiting," Celeste says.

Celeste's lived experiences help her empathize with her clients. And the recent support she received from the Rent Assistance Fund makes her more appreciative of the wraparound care CCC provides for her and her family.

"When I take these resources, I know how much it means – for it to come back to me. I needed the help, and it was there," she says.

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