

Submitter: Karen Wolfgang

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure: HB3032

Hello, committee members and staff. My name is Karen Wolfgang. I have lived in the Centennial neighborhood in East Portland for 10 years now. My kids are 12 and 14 -- in 7th and 8th grades.

I am the team leader for our Neighborhood Emergency Team (what we call the FEMA CERT program), and in that role am tasked with organizing on the neighborhood level to build community resilience. Housing is one of the most challenging pinch points for creating resilient communities in Portland. That shows up in a lot of ways, of course. Ours is a neighborhood of single-family homes, and people of generally modest means. Our infrastructure is so spread out that community spaces are few and far between, and so our neighbors experience an unfortunate lot of fragmentation and loneliness. Many of my neighbors are aging, and struggle to keep up with the property maintenance and/or property taxes on homes they've lived in for decades. Others are already "homesharing" with family members or others in their communities – we have a lot of intergenerational households in Centennial – and .

In any case, I like to try things before I advocate that others do them, too. I began to homeshare because I am divorced and generally my kids are only with me half-time. I like to spend time with my partner when my kids aren't with me, which (if it weren't for my housemate) would leave the house entirely empty. That makes no sense from an environmental or social standpoint, and frankly feels a wee bit vulnerable. I also have half a house I don't generally use: before we bought it, the former garage was remodeled to provide adult foster care; I used to run my small business from that side of the house; and during the divorce process while we were "bird-nesting" -- kids stayed at the house, and parents came and went -- I lived on that side of the house during my weeks on parenting duty.

My life is not...normal, per se. But whose is?! There are so many people with special circumstances for whom a good fit housemate could be just the answer. The financial security that a housemate can help provide is not a particular issue for me, because my ex-wife and I were fortunate enough to purchase our home through Proud Ground (another amazing program!). But the sense of security of having another adult around is really huge.

Both from my own personal experience and the perspective of creating more resilient communities, breaking down barriers to homesharing is a huge benefit. Thank you in advance for your support of HB 3032.