

Shelter from the Storm

Everyone deserves a life free from violence

January 13, 2023

Co-Chair Sollman

Co-Chair Evans

Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety

Dear Co-Chairs Sollman & Evans,

I am writing today in support of the Survivor Housing Funds that our organization has been a recipient of to the benefit of survivor's of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Human Trafficking and Stalking in Union County.

To date we have been able to serve 28 adults, and 27 children with Survivor Housing Funds. The most common way that we have assisted is by paying for a survivor's initial move in costs: first month's rent, security deposits, application fees, deposits to get utilities started and paying old outstanding bills that might prevent a survivor from getting into new housing. Moving into a new house can be a very expensive undertaking for a person who is fleeing violence. We know that victims of intimate partner violence often do not work, they are isolated, and have no ability to save up money for the large expense of moving into new housing. Often there are outstanding bills preventing them from turning on electricity or gas, this is usually due to the violence they were living in preventing them from successfully paying bills in the past. Survivor Housing has helped us to give our survivors the strong foundation they need when beginning a new safe life for themselves and their children. And the flexibility in how we use these funds is the key to many of our survivor success stories.

Recently we were able to help a woman and her four children who were stuck in a cycle of domestic violence together – she had attempted to leave her abuser several times in the past but juggling a job and raising four children in a rural setting on poverty wages always sent her back to her abuser. When she came to us this time, we were able to do something different because of the flexibility of the Survivor Housing Funds. We worked with ODHS and with our local Court System to get a restraining order that removed her abuser from their family home. We used Survivor Housing Funds to pay delinquent mortgage payments so the family could stay in their home, and the abuser was taken off of the mortgage. Survivor Housing funds also paid for repairing damages to the home that the abuser had caused in his rages. Now that the home was safe, they were applicable for additional support from ODHS. Our collaborative work along with our flexible funding has created a stable environment for this mom and her children. They have been able to resume regular life, attending church, school and work regularly. When her abuser was released from prison and attempted to resume life in the house, our survivor was able to feel safe and stable enough to call our law enforcement partners and have him trespassed from the property. She doesn't need his income to support their lives any longer and can support herself and her children without him.

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The Survivor Housing Fund allows our survivors to create a financial buffer and build up savings that keeps them safe after fleeing. When we pay past due bills, and expensive entry into rentals, survivors can set that money aside to create their own safety net. They don't have to live paycheck to paycheck when they are just trying to get stable. The fund is also complementary to other funds in our community that are more restrictive, such as only paying a portion of current rent or utilities, or just the entry fees into a rental. Whereas these funds allow us to fill that gap and assists our survivors with a good head start on stable housing for the long term.

I want to urge you to continue to ensure this fund remains in tact for our organization and our sister organizations across the state. The funds have been instrumental in the changing landscape of fighting the war against intimate partner violence and homelessness in our community.

Sincerely,



Jamie Landa
Executive Director
Shelter from the Storm

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January 13, 2023

Co-Chair Steiner
Co-Chair Sanchez
Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means

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