

Submitter: Guadalupe Torres

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Measure: HB3462

Testimony for HB 3462: Emergency Housing for All
Guadalupe Torres, Phoenix, OR

My name is Guadalupe Torres, I am from Phoenix in the Rogue Valley and I want to thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony in support of HB 3462.

When the Almeda Fire happened, I was a junior going into my senior year or high school. We were still in the middle of the pandemic and I was home alone. I had been playing video games and had a headset on so I wasn't aware the fire was happening until it was too late. My parents weren't able to pick me up so I rushed out of my house and arranged to be picked up by a family friend who was on their way home to pick up their family. The fire grew more intense by the minute and was inching closer to my neighborhood. Things happened so fast that I wasn't able to take any of our animals or belongings on my way out. By the time I was picked up, the streets were packed with cars and there was no way through to get anywhere.

We were able to make our way into Phoenix the following day around 4 AM after not being able to sleep all night. We had to check on our animals and needed to know if our house was still there. We were relieved when we found our home still standing, but thick black clouds of smoke were coming from where our animals were. Once we arrived we realized our fence had caught on fire. Because they had shut off all the water we ended up having to jump into the canal that runs behind my home and put the fire out with buckets of water between my family and I. We spent weeks at a hotel because we weren't allowed to come back to our home because the conditions were unsafe. We also couldn't get resources because we hadn't technically lost our home.

After Almeda, all of my friends, classmates and I did as much as we could to support our friends who had lost everything. Our community donated as much as they could, considering they themselves had also lost a lot and were in need. Many shared their own resources from community organizations for friends and family that didn't qualify for government assistance.

Although my family and I didn't lose our home or belongings, I lost childhood friends who were displaced and couldn't come back. I lost my community and I watched the

town that raised me into who I am , become reduced to ashes.

The trauma we all faced as a collective in Southern Oregon took a toll not only on us as individuals but also on our community and the effects are still very much present to this day. When Spring starts the only thing we can think about is preparing for fire season

HB 3462 is necessary to ensure our community feels safe and nobody is excluded from accessing resources when the next emergency happens. Southern Oregon is plagued by wildfires and we are seeing them become a norm in other parts of the state, too. I urge you to support HB 3462t and all the families who still, to this day, do not have stable housing.

Thank you for your time.