

HB 3462 Testimony

March 21, 2023

Good morning Chair Dexter, vice-chairs Gamba and Helfrich and members of the Housing and Homelessness Committee, my name is Cesar Junior and I want to thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony in support of HB 3462.

I have my parents permission to share my story. I am a survivor of the Almeda Fire. After losing our house, our belongings, unique and unrepeatable memories, my biggest problem after the fire was in my studies, because after losing our home we had to move more than 5 times and I couldn't focus on my studies.

Three months after the fire, an elderly couple donated an RV to us in which we lived for 12 months. An organization sent us to live in a mountain temporarily, and I had to get up at 5 in the morning to be able to catch the school bus which picked me up at 6:30 in the morning and classes started at 8:30 and the Departure time was at 3:15 and it dropped me off on the mountain at around 5:00.

This made me feel stressed and sad because every day I thought about the road that awaited me to get to the RV. In total, it was around **4 hours a day, 5 times a week** that I spent on the school bus. It was too much time, which I could have spent on my homework and for that reason I was about to fail all of my classes. Some days I hated having to go to school and wondered why this had happened to us. It was depressing not having my belongings, my home, my friends and all of the memories that were burned and turned into nothing but ashes.

I lost all my friends, because they were going through the same problem. Due to the housing shortage, some friends left the city, the county and others the state. I had not only lost my home and everything I had but I was also losing my friends who I grew up with and was used to socializing after school hours. That was very hard for me, because I grew up with them, we were not only schoolmates, we were also friends, almost like brothers.

It has not been easy to deal with all the pain I felt when I saw my parents desperate for a house and being rejected from places after many requisites. I had to grow up very fast, **I was only 11 years old** and I knew there wasn't much I could do to help my family.

That is why I think that a solution is to approve HB 3462, so that our community is supported. All of that made me stronger, but if this law had been in place since that day, I believe this kind of protection would have gotten us into housing sooner and it would have ensured that we would not have gone through all that.

I urge you to support HB 3462

Thank you for listening