

Submitter: Heather Pearson

On Behalf  
Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On  
Transportation and Economic Development

Measure: SB5511

Hello,

As a Resident Services Coordinator who works with formerly homeless women in the Central Eastside of Portland, I support this bill wholeheartedly. In my role, I provide various services to 60 individuals who live in subsidized, SRO housing. At this property, residents share bathrooms and kitchens, similar to college dorms. Except, this is a population of mainly 50+ year old individuals with co-occurring severe and persistent mental illness, substance use disorders, and various physical and cognitive disabilities. Almost all residents are either on fixed income or have \$0 income. In my job, I put on workshops and social events, connect residents to other local nonprofits for needs such as medical care or applying for SSI/SSDI, respond to crisis and work to prevent evictions with property management.

It is hard work. I am the only support staff for the property, and this is actually a better resident to staff ratio than most properties I've seen. On the one hand, it is amazing that in our work we can house these individuals and help them move off the streets. On the other, they deserve and are worthy of so much more support and care, as are all of the individuals waiting on our waitlist.

The proposed budget will invest in more housing production, more eviction prevention and housing stability support, and more permanent supportive housing (PSH). PSH in particular has the ability to help people get housed and then STAY HOUSED, with higher quality of life, better health outcomes, and less burnout for staff. I know that at my property, some of the women who have been evicted could have maintained their housing given the right support, as is offered by PSH. The revolving door of getting housed and then being evicted helps nobody and wastes useful funds - PSH helps to help people get the keys, and then keep the keys. Additionally, funding for homelessness prevention also helps with housing retention, and again reduces the cyclical nature of homelessness.

These investments are needed. If we don't make them now, we will be delaying the inevitable - and worsening the crisis. Do we want to invest the funds years down the line, or take bold action now and work towards an ultimately more cost-effective and more humane solution?

The individuals living outside tonight may be numbers to you, but to me I have gotten to know so many incredible women who have homelessness as part of their story.

Women who fled domestic violence with nowhere to go, women with multiple sclerosis or cancer who lost their jobs and then apartments, women with stories and hopes and dreams. Invest in them. We will all be better for it.

Thank you.