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March 18, 2025

Re: Support for SB 722—Protecting Affordable Housing for Survivors

Chair Pham, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Clackamas Women's Services (CWS), we are pleased to submit testimony in strong support of SB 722, which will help prevent displacement and extreme rent spikes by extending coverage of our state's rent stabilization statutes and prohibiting the use of price-fixing software to inflate rents. Access to stable and affordable housing is one of the biggest challenges for victims and survivors of domestic and sexual violence seeking safety and fleeing abuse.

The mission of Clackamas Women's Services (CWS) is to break the isolation of domestic and sexual violence. CWS is a community-based organization providing comprehensive, culturally responsive, and trauma-informed services to survivors of domestic/dating violence, sexual assault, elder abuse, human trafficking, and stalking. We support over 1,000 survivors across the continuum of our housing resources in our Housing Program.

Preserving housing stability is essential for all survivors of sexual and domestic violence in Oregon. As our state's housing crisis has escalated, our network of domestic and sexual violence shelters has been particularly impacted. Survivors fleeing violence have fewer places they can afford to go and are, therefore, more reliant on the shelter network. Survivors in shelters are forced to stay longer because it is harder to find affordable, safe places to move to, whether transitional or permanent housing. This means shelters have less space to offer survivors fleeing, and more people are forced to choose between homelessness and staying in an unsafe home.

For these reasons, advocates for survivors of domestic and sexual violence are seeking more support for their shelter and emergency services and are also prioritizing advocacy for long-term systemic housing policy changes that better support survivors and prevent homelessness. It is this perspective that brings us to support SB 722.

SB 722 will provide important improvements to Oregon's current rent stabilization statutes that will help prevent extreme rent spikes and inflated rents, thereby protecting housing stability for survivors. Recent studies have highlighted a significant correlation between housing cost burdens, instability, or homelessness and an increased risk of experiencing domestic or sexual violence.

- The lack of safe, stable, and affordable housing can trap individuals in abusive relationships, as the absence of alternative accommodations may force them to remain with their abusers.

- Individuals facing unstable housing situations are more vulnerable to various forms of abuse, including physical, sexual, psychological, and financial abuse.
- Homelessness is a risk factor for experiencing rape or sexual assault, with homeless individuals facing disproportionately high rates of sexual violence.
- A recent study indicated that domestic violence was the cause for 49% of women experiencing homelessness in Oregon and Washington.

There are more than 2,000 eviction filings per month in Oregon, 88% of which are due to cost burdens and inability to pay. We hear every day from survivors whose stability and security are at risk due to a lack of housing affordability.

Many transitional housing resources, such as HUD funding, limit assistance to 'fair market value' (FMR) housing. This is a reasonable approach to steward public resources, however, the calculation for FMR is a lagging indicator and we have had families displaced from our program because the rent increased beyond FMR, and we have had other families unable to keep pace with filling the gap between the cap on assistance and the rising cost of rent.

Studies show that just a \$100 increase in median rents in a community is tied to a 9% increase in homelessness in that community. At a time when Oregon is experiencing some of the highest rates of homelessness in the nation, we cannot afford to let rent spikes go unchecked.

SB 722 is the only policy tool on the table this session that would provide immediate and measurable protection for Oregonians suffering from rent spikes due to our state's affordable housing crisis. These proposed changes strike a balance between encouraging new units to enter the market and ensuring that those units do not contribute to long-term gentrification and price inflation.

For the above reasons, we urge you to pass SB 722 to protect affordable housing for survivors of domestic and sexual violence and further harm from abuse. Thank you for your consideration and for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,



Melissa Erlbaum
Executive Director