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Moving Lives Forward.

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Dear Chair Fagan, Vice Chair Girod, Members of Senate Committee on Housing:

My name is Judy Applegate Strand, CEO of Metropolitan Family Service (MFS). I am writing on behalf of MFS to encourage committee support for the passage of SB 608.

MFS is a private, not-for-profit community organization that has been serving the greater Portland area since 1950. Our mission is: "To help people get past limitations of poverty, inequity and social isolation." Our offices are in SE Portland, NE Portland, Rockwood, and Hillsboro.

We currently serve 18,000 people annually who range in age from infants to older adults. Our services include a range of community based approaches building youth success, economic wellness and health and well-being across the lifespan. We help by delivering support, resources and skill building in a person's natural community; we are in homes, schools, community centers; offering early childhood programs, in school and after school intervention, food banks, financial coaching and asset building, parent education and transportation to access food/health care for people with limited mobility. In all we do, we are deeply committed to building strength among and between the generations for the benefit of all.

The majority of clients we serve of working age, are employed. Working people and families share two key concerns with us: 1) The cost of housing outpaces incomes to the extent that people are forced to move, and, that 2) There is a serious lack of predictability for renters regarding when and by how much rents will rise. As a result, individuals and families are moving frequently; often living with friends or family, or, living in cars or on the street when there is not another choice.

For older and disabled people whom we serve through MFS Project Linkage, the risk of losing one's housing is particularly serious, as they are most often coping with chronic health concerns and a diminishing social network to fall back on.

Here are comments from our Program Manager of Older Adult/Intergenerational Programs relating to three populations groups who have expressed concerns about their housing:

"Rent increases and fears around loss of housing are central concerns of the older adults, people living with disabilities, and families (Parent Ed) that we serve. I would say that this topic is at or near the top of the list of nearly everyone we interact with, and people are often paying well over 50% of their monthly income in rent. For people receiving a fixed income such as Social Security, they may not have a way to earn additional income due to health, mobility or other factors. Additionally, SS annual increases do not keep pace with the cost of living so people may see a rent increase of 10% may be un-affordable. We have also worked with people who have been evicted without cause because the landlord want to be able to charge a higher rent to the next tenant. Finally, I have talked with some people who live in apartments that are in disrepair. They are very reluctant to press for repairs for fear that their rent will be increased." Written statement by Laura Heller, Licensed Clinical Social Worker and MFS Program Manager.

Thank you for your careful consideration of the people we serve our communities as you make your decision on your vote. If passed, SB 608 would reduce the risk of sudden loss of housing and offer greater housing stability to people in our communities who face economic constraints, as well as other serious challenges. We could remove one major challenge with the passing of this bill!

Thank you for your service to the people of Oregon.

Respectfully submitted,



Judy Applegate Strand
Chief Executive Officer
Metropolitan Family Service