

From:
To: [Exhibits SHOUS](#)
Subject: Vote Yes on SB 608
Date: Monday, February 4, 2019 1:36:42 PM

Dear Chair Fagan, Vice Chair Girod, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Denise Syrett. I live in Eugene, Oregon. I have a mental illness and I work part time as a mental health peer counselor for a non-profit called L.I.L.A. (Lane Alliance for Independent Living). L.I.L.A. works with adults with physical and/or mental disabilities to support them in living their best life, as independently as possible.

The number one issue that brings people to L.I.L.A. is help finding or keeping their housing. But I have nothing to offer them. I work with people who became disabled while young, never worked, and are not capable of working, and now receive Social Security Insurance (SSI) which gives them a monthly income of approximately \$750. They usually also receive food stamps. Many of them are homeless, or living in substandard housing or travel trailers, often filled with black mold and mice. It is horrifying. The property owners know that people with autism or traumatic brain injuries or severe mental illnesses will not make a fuss or demand better maintenance because if they do make a fuss, they can so easily be evicted. These property owners are preying upon vulnerable, isolated people to essentially steal their government benefits. **There is nothing to stop them from doing this.**

All of the housing supports, waitlists, the Mission, churches, charities, rest stops, HUD, housing vouchers, etc., are all full and closed. Waitlists are two years long. Recently, I worked with a young woman who is spending \$650 a month (out of her \$750 income) to live in a vermin-infested travel trailer out in the country. She doesn't want to make a fuss with her landlord (who is preying upon a mentally ill woman) for fear of getting kicked out. She will then be on the street where she will be definitely mugged and probably raped. I have nothing to offer her in terms of help or even hope at this point. I also worked with a man who was paying \$700 a month for a tiny apartment filled with black mold who was evicted for no cause because the landlord wanted (finally) to fix the place up and get a higher rent. My client became homeless.

Having our most vulnerable people living on the street or in awful conditions is inhumane. Disabled people are preyed upon with vicious regularity. I worked with an elderly, mentally ill homeless man who was beaten unconscious by two teenagers to rob him of the Social Security money he had just withdrawn from the bank. Another homeless man, Ovid Neal, was murdered a few hours later as they robbed him of his recently withdrawn SSI money. He was beaten to death. The cost to our community of these crimes, never mind the human suffering, is enormous.

Any disabled person on a low income is loathe to complain to their landlord or ask for repairs for fear of being evicted. For poor people, eviction can literally mean death. Let me repeat that: **EVICTION CAN MEAN DEATH.**

Please vote YES in support of SB 608.

Thank you for your interest, time, and effort to bring some reasonable protections to the most vulnerable people in our society.

Denise Syrett

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From:
To: [Exhibits SHOUS](#)
Subject: VOTE YES ON SB 608
Date: Monday, February 4, 2019 2:10:59 PM

Dear Chair Fagan, Vice Chair Girod, and Committee Members,

My name is Denise Syrett. I live in Eugene, in a popular, busy neighborhood. I live on a Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) because of a mental illness. I work twenty hours a week as a mental health peer counselor. Part of my work is at the Oregon State Hospital in Junction City where I am a Peer Support Specialist working directly with clients.

My stable and productive life now, and my future life depend upon the generosity of my landlord. I live in a clean, well-maintained four-plex apartment building. I pay \$700 a month for a one-bedroom unit that could easily rent for \$950. If a dishwasher is added, it could rent for more than that. My landlord keeps our rent affordable (and the rents in another building he owns) because he is a kind person who believes in affordable housing as a stabilizing element of his community. He could be making significantly more money every month if he kicked us all out. My building houses disabled people and two retired Vietnam veterans.

If my generous landlord were to die or sell his properties, the likelihood of a new owner increasing our rents by several hundred dollars a month is high. I could not afford this higher rent. I do not know where I would go or what I would do to find another affordable, clean place. All of the waitlists for affordable housing are closed. I think about this possibility every single day. I am terrified of ending up homeless. I wake up at night thinking about this.

For those of us on a disability income, the ability to live in a safe, stable place means that we can work part time and even contemplate getting off of our benefits completely and transitioning to full-time employment. We can dream big and contribute to our communities. We can pay taxes by working again. But worrying that my stable life can come crashing down any month causes me enormous stress and worry. I have worked so hard to get a point where I can work again. Should I even try to build a better life if it can be ripped away from me in thirty days?

Please support the reasonable, fair new rules put forth in SB 608. Please vote YES on SB 608 so that lower income people can continue to contribute to our community and live in safe, healthy places without the constant fear of upheaval. SB 608 provides protections for those of us vulnerable to greedy property owners.

Thank you for reading my letter and thank you for your efforts to understand and address this important issue.

Regards,

Denise Syrett