

Submitter: Olia Gorelkina  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary  
Measure: HB2933

Hello,

My name is Olia Gorelkina. I am a housing coordinator at Slavic Oregon Social Services within Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon.

Working with survivors of domestic and sexual violence is a hard job, especially since our clients are of specific immigrant origin. They don't have a knowledge of systems (what they have is deep mistrust of them), government supports, law, and rights.

Work with housing is getting harder every day, due to growing prices on housing. It's hard for regular people to feel secure in rented housing, and same is almost impossible for immigrant survivors of DVSA. With growing population of Slavic speaking immigrants in tri-county area, our organization cannot offer services to every person who reaches out to us for help, due to our staff members having limited capacity. As an only Russian speaking housing specialist in Portland, I am trying my hardest to provide this expertise to people, but I am getting desperate and discouraged, since dv housing resources for immigrants are so limited.

I see families losing their housing daily. Women with no education, no ability to speak or write in English, with no renting history in their name, are being thrown out on the street by their abusers with all of their children. They can't get a full time job, because they cannot afford child care, and part time jobs cannot offer enough money to afford rent. People are searching for cheaper places, government subsidies, but there isn't nearly enough of them. Our program has such limited funds, we can offer maximum of 2-3 months of rental support, which isn't enough time for survivors to figure out all their future. We don't have a Slavic specific DV shelter to offer them temporary placement while we are searching to something more permanent.

To offer a specific example, I'd like to bring up one of the cases I am working on right now. This participant, after encountering years of abuse (that continues to this day), lost her remote job in Ukraine due to war. She has to stay at home 24/7, because she is a caretaker for her disabled daughter. She has caregivers coming in for a few hours a day, but unfortunately it's not full time. Participant is severely exhausted, hasn't been able to get a night sleep on years, and lost her income. She cannot move, because her daughter is connected to a lot of machines supporting her every day life. She cannot find another online job in the States due to her language barrier, and she cannot get an in person job, as no one can take care of her child in her absence. Her rent is very high, and growing rapidly. Unfortunately, our organization provided all limited help for her housing situation. This family needs permanent housing assistance, but there is none that can be offered. And this is only one small story. What we witness every day is heartbreaking.

For us to continue this work, we need to have more finances. We need money to make sure that our clients can become self-sufficient while going through our

program. We need to know that no one will become houseless tomorrow, because they can't afford the extremely high rent in Portland area. We need more people to be able to offer services, so we can take more people off the waitlist and help them to get to safety.

I hope this testimony will be heard.

Thank you.