

**From:**  
**To:** [Exhibits SHOUS](#)  
**Subject:** Please vote YES to support SB 608  
**Date:** Thursday, January 31, 2019 3:03:41 PM

---

To: Chair Fagan, Vice Chair Girod, Members of the Committee

My name is Nicole Wirth and I live in Gresham, Oregon. I work for Providence Medial Group Gresham clinic. We have a strong mission to serve the poor and vulnerable populations of our community. Our Gresham clinic serves 10,000 patients for family and internal medicine, primary care. I am a social work case manager and in my role I work a great deal with individuals and families who are living in poverty, the working poor, who cannot afford the housing they are in, cannot get access to subsidized housing due to long waitlists. Additionally I work with many individuals who are homeless and live in their cars, on the street, or are couch surfing with friends and family to get by.

I believe that everyone needs a safe and stable place to call home. It is especially important for vulnerable people, the very young and the elderly, this physically disabled, and those with mental health or developmental disabilities. People with complex medical problems need a safe place so they can attend to their medical needs - have a refridgerator to store their medications, have adequate food and cooking facilities to learn to prepare healthy meals to improve their chronic medical conditions (Cardiac disease, Diabetes, Congestive Heart Failure).

I have worked with many elderly women who live alone in an apartment in the East County area of Multnomah County. I hear tale after tale of their landlords raising their rent by 1/3 to 1/2 and that they are no longer able to afford to live there and have to move out. I have had to work with these women to try to find room for rent arrangements as they are low income (\$750 - \$1100/month) and cannot afford the rents for even the lowest rent places in Multnomah County.

I worked with a man who had a massive cardiac event and was unable to work after this occurred. He had no income, but was able to get onto Social Security Disability Income. Due to his medical condition we were able to access some funds through a social service agency to help him make his rent. Now with the SSDI income which is much less than his previous work income, he pays 80% of his income toward rent, leaving very little for any other bills, food, transportation. He is unable to secure more affordable housing and the waitlists for subsidized housing are not available. Should his landlord raise his rent he will likely be evicted from the apartment.

For the people in my community who are struggling in poverty to make daily ends meet, whether for themselves or their families, it would be such a positive impact for these folks to have some stability, some peace of mind, regarding their living situation. Social Determinants of Health are recognized as a leading cause of rising healthcare utilization and costs across our society. Housing is a big part of this. The more unstable people's lives become, the sicker they become and the more likely they are to utilize expensive healthcare such as hospitals and emergency department care. They are unable to afford or lack stability to manage medications they need to prevent crises.

**Please vote YES to support SB 608.** People who rent their homes are depending on the Legislature to act to provide basic protections and stability. We know we need to address a range of issues to solve the housing problems our communities are facing, and it is critical the Legislature act now to pass SB 608. Please vote yes on SB 608.

Thank you to the Committee for your service and the work you are doing for our communities.

Sincerely,  
Nicole Wirth, LCSW