



256 Warner Milne Road, Oregon City, OR 97045  
(503) 655-8600 | [www.cwsor.org](http://www.cwsor.org)

May 5, 2017

Senate Committee on Human Services  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court Street, NE, Salem, Oregon

**Re: Support for HB 2004A**

Chair Gelser, Vice-Chair Olsen, and members of the committee,

My name is Kira Meyrick and I am the administrative projects coordinator at Clackamas Women's Services (CWS). Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of HB 2004A. For over 30 years, CWS has provided critical services — including emergency and confidential shelter, a 24/7 crisis line, counseling, support groups, legal advocacy, and community education — to survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, elder abuse, and human trafficking.

One of the most important needs for survivors is safe and stable housing. Housing serves as the foundation of stability, providing consistency for kids in attending school, and helping survivors stay connected to their community. Unfortunately, affordable housing is becoming increasingly elusive for survivors and their family. In the past few years, we have all seen rental costs skyrocket and vacancy rates plummet. This disproportionately affects the women and children we serve, who are often forced to either stay in the abusive relationship or face homelessness.

Even for those working full-time or multiple jobs, the majority still don't earn enough to afford rent, especially as a "fair market" rate for a two-bedroom apartment in Clackamas County is now a staggering \$1,242 — not to mention the approximately \$3,000-\$4,000 often required in move-in costs. And with so few rental units available overall, survivors now have little to no choice in where they live, which, in Clackamas County, is often in a rural area with which they aren't familiar and often lack access to public transportation. Further, survivors now need a dedicated advocate or team of advocates to navigate a process they used to be able to pursue independently. For example, as case managers, we often show up an hour early for an available unit's open house, only to find a long line of people already waiting, and then race through the application process in the hope of being one of the first to submit it.

Even if survivors are lucky enough to find housing, they still have to contend with no-cause evictions, which we have seen some bad-actor landlords regularly use in retaliation to requested repairs, or in reaction to tenants who access police services to protect themselves. We also know of landlords who frequently issue no-cause evictions so that they can pocket deposits from new tenants, as well as raise the rent yet again. Similarly, we have also encountered several landlords who offer only 6-

month leases, which they have yet to renew, leaving the survivor — who has done nothing wrong — scrambling, and often failing, to secure new housing.

No-cause notices and extreme rent increases create a power-imbalance between landlords and tenants that deprives tenants of stability, even if they have complied with the terms of their rental agreements. For survivors, safe and stable housing can determine whether a family survives or not. We must act now to provide stability and fairness.

There are countless stories of survivors in our community struggling with too-high rents, lack of options, and the looming threat of no-cause evictions. One that particularly stands out is that of a mother of two children, the youngest under a year old, who recently reached out to our agency after years of escalating physical and emotional abuse. While staying at our emergency shelter, she worked with our housing team for over three long months until finally securing an affordable apartment. However, once she moved in, she realized that both her stove and refrigerator were broken, and the apartment had a considerable black mold problem. When she requested the needed repairs, she was issued a no-cause eviction within days, and was given two weeks to leave. It is impossible to find an affordable unit in that period of time, and she is currently homeless and strongly considering going back to her abuser due to her lack of options.

Sadly, her story is not unique. Many of our staff members are renters as well, so this is something they likewise experience in their personal lives. The women and children we serve, as well as our own families, desperately need rent stabilization and just-cause evictions. From all of us at CWS, we urge you to pass HB 2004 A.

Sincerely,

Kira Meyrick, MSW  
Administrative Projects Coordinator