

Dear Senator Port and members of the Committee on Housing and Homelessness Prevention:

I am an architect. The design of affordable housing is a very small part of our work – but I also think it is some of the most important work we do. Helping people in crisis to have a home that is safe, healthy, and dignified feels like we are addressing a core human need. Our lack of affordable housing (state and country) is a failure of focus, compassion, and care for our fellow citizens who cannot do so for themselves. We need to do more and do it better. And I hope my small contributions help to do so in ways that bring dignity, wellbeing and tenacity to the fortunate people who get to live in buildings we have designed.

After working with these folks, it is clear to me that our only way of surmounting the deficit in adequate housing for the poor is to provide continuous, reliable, and dedicated funding that can be counted on year after year to ramp up and sustain efforts to meet the build our housing stock. Funding sources like the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC), bond funding, and all the many state and federal sources are great but they are clearly not enough. The volatility in - and unreliability to plan for - funding availability is a powerful disincentive to every form and non-profit businesses working in this area. I think it actually may exceed the regulatory burden that too often accompanies such governmental funding sources.

Passing a constitutional amendment to create dedicated affordable housing funds as well as support programs to help renters and to preserve low income homeowners staying in and maintain their homes are far better investments in our collective future than the currently inadequate and overregulated system. Not only will the social cost but also the actual expenditures of the state will fall over time when we get people into safe, healthy and clean housing.

At community events, meet the resident events, and affordable housing volunteer events I meet people barely scraping by. Many, but not all, are working more than one job to keep a roof over the heads of their families. I am not naïve to think that we can ever eradicate poverty. Instead I am hopeful we can try harder to reduce poverty to being a manageable social concern, not the overwhelming burden on society that we now live with.

So I implore you to pass the constitutional amendment to provide predictable level of funds needed to meet the needs of our state's poorest residents. May God smile on us for trying to be better human beings because it all comes back to caring for our fellow citizens as we would do for ourselves and our own families.

Sincerely,

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