



Judiciary Committee Testimony Liz Peetz

May 26, 2020 – HB 1332

Good morning members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Liz Peetz and I'm here on behalf of the Colorado Association of REALTORS®. We represent more than 26,000 members across the state. We work hard to advocate for homeownership for everyone and that includes our work to provide affordable housing. I thank the bill sponsors for working with us ahead of introduction on some aspects of the bill, but we still have strong concerns about the existing form of HB20-1332.

We have serious concerns with HB-1322 as drafted and introduced. We cannot support the bill in its current form without a few amendments that are very important to the landlords that would provide affordable housing to several Coloradans across our state both now and when we are able to return back to normal operations after the Covid-19 emergency.

First, we respectfully ask that if there are processing delays by the federal government such as a government shutdown that we do not hold landlords responsible for factors that they cannot control in terms of their liability for processing a housing voucher. Existing HUD regulations do not go far enough to protect these landlords in cases of emergency when the federal government cannot function.

Second, we ask that a landlord who processes credit of a rental applicant is not in violation of the source of income as a type of unfair housing practice. This request is critical to ensure that the

broad way the bill is drafted does not sweep every housing provider into liability for litigation under the Fair Housing Act in situations outside of public housing assistance sector.

Without these very important amendments the Colorado Association of REALTORS® cannot support this legislation. We ask that the bill sponsors please amend the bill so that we do not place several housing providers in jeopardy. We need these important housing providers in our housing market economy so that we preserve and increase the amount of affordable housing available to Coloradans. It is more important now than ever that we do not limit the supply of affordable housing.



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May 17, 2020

Please support HB 20-1332

Dear Members of the Colorado General Assembly:

These are unprecedented times and we are all trying to figure out how to proceed. Instead of focusing on “getting back to normal” we have been urging policymakers and citizens alike to focus on reimagining the Colorado we all want.

The Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition is the only disability-led statewide organization run by and for people with all types of disabilities. We exist to advocate for social justice on behalf of people with all types of disabilities (cross-disability). As a statewide organization and one that works with people with all types of disabilities we see problems from many perspectives including those often left out of policy discussions. When we did a listening tour in 2018 housing was the greatest concern of people around the state. The ability of landlords to discriminate based on source of income has been identified and continues to be a serious problem.

There are two specific groups that are often left out of public policy debates whose concerns I want to elevate for your consideration:

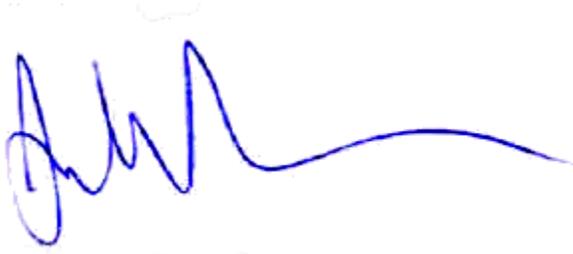
- 1) People living in nursing facilities or other institutional/congregate settings who are able to leave and want to leave. The state of Colorado has long recognized that people should be served in the most integrated settings because it is not only the right thing to do but the economically responsible thing to do. Some people in nursing facilities are basically there because they cannot find housing and cannot be accommodated in shelters or survive the street...so it is a homeless shelter with a tab of over \$8000 a month. For this reason, the general assembly has allocated funds for those seeking to leave facilities to receive a housing voucher. We know of 40 people urgently waiting right now to get out with hundreds more waiting for bureaucratic processes to begin the “transition” process. The stumbling block is almost always housing—because having a voucher does not assure that they can use it due to source of income discrimination. Assuming that community based services are half of the cost of a facility and we will spend \$4000 a month (highly inflated as most do not need this level of care) and assuming only 40 people leave and can get housing without this barrier

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- that is a saving of almost \$2 million a year. If 100 people are able to leave a year of savings could be \$4,8 million. Not to mention the danger that congregate living poses, and the dramatically improved quality of life for people that neither want nor need to be in an institutional setting.
- 2) We heard a lot in rural areas that there is significant discrimination based on source of income. In many rural and frontier communities there are only one or two housing complexes that are "low-income". We have had concerning complaints from residents living in some of these complexes. Even though many have housing vouchers, they have nowhere else they can live because that is the only place in town that accepts section 8. People that have always lived in rural areas are often quite attached to their communities. It is culturally insensitive to rural people to tell them to just go live elsewhere. Many of our members have lived in these communities for their whole life but became disabled sometime as an adult, or even an older adult. Because they have no choices they are often afraid to complain even if there are conditions that affect their health.

These are two groups that are rarely heard from, and who even in the best of times rarely can get to the capitol. We wanted to make sure you heard their voices. The SOI protections do not get tenants or applicants out of any obligation of being a tenant. The pandemic is going to make housing even a bigger issue and we need to protect people who may be newly poor, and relying on programs like unemployment which is temporary in nature. The more we can help people to stay housed, the better we will be as a state.

Sincerely,



Julie Reiskin
Executive Director

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