



Toledo Lucas County Homelessness Board
1946 N. 13th Street, #437; Toledo, OH 43604

February 19, 2021

Chairman Merrin, Vice Chair Riedel, Ranking Member Sobecki, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer written testimony on behalf of Toledo Lucas County Homelessness Board (TLCHB). This testimony is to request your support of the amendment to the Ohio Revised Code Section 5709.121 that will preserve the tax exemption for permanent supportive housing in Ohio. The recent decision by the Board of Tax Appeals threatens to decimate a critical resource for our homeless response system throughout Ohio. I implore each of you to correct this harmful decision by supporting H.B. 71.

Toledo Lucas County Homelessness Board's mission is to provide leadership for the functional elimination and future prevention of homelessness in Lucas County. Formally, the TLCHB is the lead agency and collaborative applicant for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Continuum of Care. It is our responsibility to coordinate service delivery across an array of shelters and housing providers serving the homeless population in Toledo and Lucas County.

In 2017, TLCHB and the Lucas County Mental Health and Recovery Services Board collaborated to convene what is now known as the No Barriers Housing Core Leadership team. No Barriers Housing represents our community's adoption of "housing first" values and strategies, which to housing as the foundation for improving the physical, mental, and emotional health of the residents. Our goal is simple—end chronic homelessness in Lucas County.

Permanent Supportive Housing is one of the most important tools for combatting homelessness, particularly for those individuals and households with disabling conditions who experience or are at-risk of chronic homelessness. PSH is based on the basic principle that combining stable housing and ongoing supportive services leads to long-term housing stability, improved physical and behavioral health outcomes, and reduced use of crisis services such as emergency departments, hospitals, and jails. This housing intervention is both life-saving and cost-effective.

TLCHB is proud to partner with several permanent supportive housing organizations. The Commons at Garden Lake, owned and operated by National Church Residences, is a 75-unit permanent supportive housing community serving low-income and disabled veterans who have struggled with disability, mental health conditions, homelessness, and/or addiction. Chestnut Hill Apartments, operated by Volunteers of America, is a 40-unit permanent supportive housing community that serves chronically homeless individuals with a disabling condition and residents re-entering society following incarceration. Neighborhood Properties, Inc. (NPI) has been providing supportive housing services in community for over 30 years. Established in 1988 with

the mission of ending homelessness for persons with mental illness & addiction disorders, NPI owns 540 apartments in 60 locations. NPI combines their housing with evidenced-based practices, including housing first, permanent supportive housing, supportive employment, peer support, critical time intervention, motivational interviewing, and SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) to create a comprehensive approach that supports a person's individual recovery. Study after study has demonstrated these supportive service practices dramatically increase the likelihood of long-term housing stability, and improve physical, mental, and emotional health outcomes. The loss of the property tax exemption would threaten the continued operations for each of these incredible organizations.

Treatment Accountability for Safer Communities (TASC) of Northwest Ohio has been working toward the development of a 46-unit permanent supportive housing community in Toledo, Ohio, for several years. This project would significantly increase the number of permanent supportive housing units in our community and could eliminate a significant portion of our current waiting list. TASC's development efforts have been stalled by several challenges and the difficulty of operating with a very tight budget. The loss of the property tax exemption could prevent the completion of this development project.

Despite these incredible efforts and resources, TLCHB has 155 individuals and households that would qualify for permanent supportive housing on our waiting list. Our community needs additional investment in permanent supportive housing, not less. There is a real and brutal long-term cost, both in terms of human life and dollars, to do nothing. That cost would be prohibitive and would have a devastatingly adverse impact on services available to Ohio's most vulnerable citizens.

Toledo Lucas County Homelessness Board urges the Committee to support this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Rachel Gagnon
Executive Director
Toledo Lucas County Homelessness Board