



February 23, 2021

Chairperson Merrin, Vice Chair Riedel, Ranking Member Sobecki

My name is Leah Werner. I'm here on behalf of the Corporation for Supportive Housing which is a non-profit helping communities create and effectively manage supportive housing in more than 62 counties in Ohio for over fifteen years. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

A recent decision by the Board of Tax Appeals jeopardizes current operations of permanent supportive housing and will create a chilling effect on future development of supportive housing in Ohio. These housing units simply cannot operate without the tax exemption, which helps keep costs down and rents low. Tenants are extremely low income and without subsidy would be living on the streets or in shelters. Without the intensive services offered through supportive housing, they would be unable to remain safely housed. This is our most important tool in combatting homelessness and we cannot allow it to be threatened, particularly during a pandemic.

This testimony is to request your support of the pending amendment to the Ohio Revised Code Section 5709.121 that will preserve a critically important tax exemption that makes possible the operation of permanent supportive housing in Ohio. Permanent supportive housing refers to a housing intervention for individuals and households with disabling conditions who experience or are at-risk of long-term homelessness. This housing intervention is cost-effective and life-saving across the state. There are more than 13,000 units of permanent supportive housing that keep people off the streets and out of emergency rooms and jails across our great state.

Numerous rigorous studies have found that supportive housing saves money and lives, and keeps our communities safer. The Returning Home Ohio (RHO) and Community Transition Program (CTP), which the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) manages on behalf of Ohio's Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections and the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services has demonstrated dramatic recidivism reductions. Our CTP program averages 7% recidivism after three years, compared to Ohio's most recently reported 31.4% three-year rate. RHO was evaluated by the Urban Institute and found to have a 60% reduction in recidivism and a 300% increase in participation in behavioral health care.

CSH, urges the Committee to support this legislation. Thank you.

Leah Werner, Senior Program Manager, on behalf of CSH