

Roberta DiMezza

From: Sherry Hawkins <shawkins@clarisvision.com>
Sent: Wednesday, July 7, 2021 10:01 AM
To: House Judiciary Committee
Subject: Homeless needs help regards to bill H6464

Good morning,

I am aware that the meeting for this bill has already been held, but I felt I should pass on my story.

I am writing this email in reference to a legislation bill H6464 (Tanzi) that is trying to be passed. With this legislation, I believe it will make it so renters will have their evictions sealed, so no landlord may look them up.

If I am correct with what I believe it means, I agree with this decision, and have a story to share.

Back in 2020, our family was evicted. We had lived in the same apartment for 11 years. The apartment complex was HUD funded, so for low income. We went to court on February 25 due to our rent being late. It was due February 5, not even a month late. This is horrifying because this is housing for low income people. If they are not willing to be helpful and allow for a little leeway, then who will? There also was a discrepancy in the amount owed. We had receipts to prove the discrepancy, and they were unwilling to change the amount owed to reflect this. We had to go to court a few times while living there to make payment arrangements. We were told this was how we had to make the arrangements. Since we have been evicted, we found out that the 4 times we went to court to make the arrangements had been listed as evictions. These arrangements were all paid and satisfied. Once we were at court, we offered to pay the rent minus the discrepancy and got told by the lawyer that it was not good enough. So, based on that we were evicted. The judge told us there was nothing she could do. We know that there have been cases that the judge has been able to overturn the judgement, considering it was not even a month that we were late! Not only was the judge not willing to help us, she also told us it was up to the landlord how long they gave us to get out. Again, we know of cases where the judge sets the amount of time to vacate the property. We have two kids that both have disabilities. We even mentioned that in court and got the same response. We asked for a little extra time due to the disabilities, and no help was given. Instead we got met with an almost impossible deadline to vacate the property. We went to court on February 25 and had only until March 1 to vacate. Due to the

eviction, and the ones from the past that were done to make payment arrangements, we have yet to find a place to live. We have been homeless living in a motel during COVID, until the campsites opened and since the campsites opened, camping out. We are still at campsites til this day. This is also becoming a problem. We have spoken to the management at the campsite, which is state run and they are unwilling to let us stay there more than the 14 day stay allowed. We have explained our situation that we have nowhere else to go. The other campsites have no sites open, and still got a no. So, the weeks we have no sites, we sleep in our car. We are willing to move from campsite to campsite understanding that it is a first come first serve basis. We also understand that some weekends they may sell out, and we are willingly too leave to make room, no problem. We were able to do this last year and we did leave when nothing was available with no problems and we changed campsites almost every two weeks, sometimes every week. We are trying to make it as stable as we can for our children. We have lost out on three homes that we know of due to the evictions. We know this because the landlords of these three properties have told us this was the reason they were not going to rent to us. I work a full time and part time job, my husband works a full time job, my daughter works two part time jobs and her fiance works a full time job as well. It is obvious we make enough money to cover the rent. With this legislation passed, we could have had stable housing for our family last year. We would have only been homeless for a few months, instead we have been for over 1 year and there is no hope in sight. We still look on a daily basis. We send out requests to landlords and get no response. When we do get a response, it is for more information. Once we give them the information, including about the evictions, we hear nothing back. We have turned to many agencies that are trying to help but are overwhelmed with other families in our situation. We have placed applications with other low income housings but they are full and have no vacancies. We have even placed our name on the shelter list, and even they are so backed up that there is no space there for us either. We need to stay in the South County area due to my children and their schooling. They are doing well in school, even with their disabilities.

Thank you for your time in reading my letter.

Sincerely,

Sherry Hawkins

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