

**Testimony of The Pew Charitable Trusts**  
**Alex Horowitz, Director, Housing Policy Initiative**

**March 30, 2026**

**House Bill 8036- Supportive**

Thank you, Chair Casey and members of the committee for the opportunity to provide testimony. I'm Alex Horowitz from the Housing Policy Initiative at The Pew Charitable Trusts, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization.

We have studied co-living extensively because it is usually the most affordable housing option available to residents, with rents typically lower than either single-family houses or apartments.<sup>1</sup> Co-living, whether via shared houses, dorm-style units, residential hotels, or historically in a single-room occupancy format, was common throughout U.S. history until the 1970s, when it diminished quickly in response to more restrictive zoning and building codes.<sup>2</sup> In the early 1900s, one-third to one-half of city residents had either rented a room in someone else's house or rented out a room to a boarder.<sup>3</sup> As recently as the 1950s, single-room occupancy units were about a tenth of the rental housing stock in major cities.<sup>4</sup>

When low-cost co-living was widely available, homelessness was rare.<sup>5</sup> The surge in homelessness in the U.S. occurred as the low-cost housing stock declined because former single-room occupancy residents could not afford the higher rents of full apartments or houses. One survey of residents entering a homeless shelter found half were moving in directly from single-room occupancy buildings.<sup>6</sup>

Pew's research with the architecture firm Gensler has found that vacant office buildings can be converted into dorm-style co-living at a lower cost and greater efficiency than into traditional

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<sup>1</sup> Alex Horowitz and Tushar Kansal, "Converting Obsolete Offices to Small Co-Living Apartments Could Help Ease U.S. Housing Shortage," <https://www.pew.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2026/03/24/converting-obsolete-offices-to-small-co-living-apartments-could-help-ease-us-housing-shortage>

<sup>2</sup> Rebecca Baird-Remba and Alex Horowitz, "How States and Cities Decimated Americans' Lowest-Cost Housing Option," <https://www.pew.org/en/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2025/07/how-states-and-cities-decimated-americans-lowest-cost-housing-option>

<sup>3</sup> Edward Pinto, "The Decline of SROs and its Consequences for Housing Affordability," [https://heat.aeihousingcenter.org/toolkit/case\\_studies](https://heat.aeihousingcenter.org/toolkit/case_studies)

<sup>4</sup> Brian J. Sullivan and Jonathan Burke, "Single-Room Occupancy Housing in New York City: The Origins and Dimensions of a Crisis," *City University of New York Law Review* 17, no. 1 (2013), <https://academicworks.cuny.edu/ctr/vol17/iss1/5/>

<sup>5</sup> Lucas Munson, "Small Rooms, Big Impact: Could SROs Help Fix Boston's Housing Crisis?" <https://www.bostonindicators.org/article-pages/2025/march/room-occupancy>

<sup>6</sup> Baird-Remba and Horowitz.

apartments.<sup>7</sup> The additional units and lower conversion cost enable lower rents, projected at about \$700 to \$1,000 per month, including all utilities.<sup>8</sup>

Technology companies have also emerged to make it easier for landlords to rent out rooms individually in homes, with each tenant on a separate lease.<sup>9</sup> This style of housing reduces barriers to moving into housing because third-party platforms allow payments by the week, paycheck, or month, and usually do not require a security deposit.<sup>10</sup>

To improve housing affordability and reduce homelessness, states including Iowa, Oregon, Colorado, New Hampshire, Texas, Hawaii, and Washington have enacted elements of HB8036 in recent years.<sup>11</sup> These laws give owners additional options to make use of existing buildings, including the more than one billion vacant square feet of office space in the U.S., much of which can be converted more efficiently into co-living than full individual apartments.

Where allowed, co-living has been an effective model for improving affordability for residents without requiring additional public subsidy.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.



**Alex Horowitz**

Director, Housing Policy Initiative, Government Performance  
The Pew Charitable Trusts  
901 E Street, NW, Washington, DC 20004

p: 202-540-6315 | e: [ahorowitz@pewtrusts.org](mailto:ahorowitz@pewtrusts.org) | <http://www.pew.org/housingpolicy>

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<sup>7</sup> Terry Hogan and Wes LeBlanc, “How a New Vision for Flexible Co-Living Conversions Can Support Housing Affordability,” <https://www.gensler.com/blog/pew-study-flexible-office-to-co-living-conversions>

<sup>8</sup> Horowitz and Kansal.

<sup>9</sup> Nicholas Kristof, “The Old New Way to Provide Cheap Housing,”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/09/opinion/homelessness-housing-shortage.html>

<sup>10</sup> PadSplit, “Social Impact Report,” <https://www.padsplit.com/impact/>

<sup>11</sup> Kery Murakami and Gabriel Kravitz, “New Laws Open Doors to Affordable Shared Housing Arrangements,” <https://www.pew.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2024/12/04/new-laws-open-doors-to-affordable-shared-housing-arrangements>