

Lisa Battan

Testimony as private citizen/representing self

HB24-1431

Greetings committee members. Thank you for your time. I would like to please speak in support of HB24-1431. Stable housing for survivors of domestic and sexual violence is often a key component for leaving the abuse and establishing both physical and psychological safety. Further, domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness in Colorado and nationally. According to the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative (2024), as much as 17% of families who are unhoused are fleeing domestic violence in their homes. Assisting survivors in obtaining stable housing can often be the first step towards them regaining their autonomy. Having a stable home supports people to stay employed or to find employment, education, and other opportunities. Additionally, the rapid rehousing model in domestic violence situations has been shown to be effective in other states such California and Washington.

According to the National Network to End Domestic Violence, financial abuse occurs in approximately 99% of domestic violence cases. I have worked with domestic violence survivors and their families who faced incredible financial barriers--in one situation, the abuser did not allow the victim to work or drive, and initially I was unsure about how we were going to be able to effectively support this victim who wanted to leave her abuser. In order to assist the victim and her children in establishing safety, I used our flexible emergency funds to place the family in a hotel temporarily, rent a moving truck and storage unit, and buy groceries. I was able to get the victim connected with a housing navigator, who assisted the victim in completing a housing needs assessment. From there, and with additional use of our emergency funds, she was able to access affordable housing and she and her children moved in a little over a week later. From there, the victim was able to access other supportive services to find a job and eventually obtain her drivers license--further expanding her future opportunities.

Financial abuse, when coupled with rising housing costs, can often feel like an insurmountable barrier to victims/survivors when they are wanting to leave their abuser. Many victims report that they stay in abusive relationships because they don't want to risk being unhoused with their children and pets. I ask the Committee Members to please consider what having a stable home means to them and their families--what they may not have been able to achieve if they were constantly questioning where they are going to sleep that night, store their belongings, or feed their children. This bill will support survivors in that most crucial part of establishing safety--a stable home. I humbly ask for your support and consideration of this legislation. Thank you for your time.