

**Opening Statement of Ranking Member Sherrod Brown
Examining Bipartisan Bills to Promote Housing Access and Safety
November 7, 2019**

Thank you, Chairman Crapo for holding today's hearing, and thank you to all of the witnesses for being here today.

I'd like to start by taking a moment to acknowledge the passing of one of our former colleagues, Senator Kay Hagan.

Senator Hagan contributed so much to this Committee and was a fierce advocate for the people of North Carolina. Our thoughts and prayers are with her family.

I have long said that the "housing" part of this Committee's name doesn't get enough attention. Today's hearing is an important, but small, step toward giving the affordable housing crisis we have in this country the attention it deserves.

Right now, nearly 11 million households spend more than half of their income on housing, and 7 of the 10 fastest growing jobs don't pay enough to afford a one bedroom apartment.

This is not an urban problem or a rural problem – it hits nearly every community in every state.

And instead of working to solve this crisis, this Administration is making it worse – from proposing deep cuts to the HUD budget, to dismantling fair housing protections, to advocating for a housing finance system that would make mortgages more expensive and harder to get.

Fortunately, Members on this committee are taking some steps to address the housing challenges we face. Today we'll look at our Members' bipartisan legislation that would address three unique housing issues.

The *HUD Manufactured Housing Modernization Act*, introduced by Senators Cortez Masto and Scott, would require communities to consider manufactured housing as they develop strategic plans to address their local housing and community development needs with federal grants.

Manufactured housing is home to 22 million people and meets critical affordable housing needs across the country, including in Ohio.

Senators Scott and Menendez's *C-O ALERTS Act* responds to two tragic deaths from carbon monoxide poisoning in HUD-assisted housing earlier this year.

No one should have to fear their home is going to poison them. Their bill would finally require carbon monoxide detectors in all federally assisted units that have carbon monoxide risk, to prevent more of these avoidable deaths.

It would take a step toward ensuring that everyone, no matter their income, can be safe in their home.

And finally, we'll discuss the need for a program to address the housing needs of young people exiting foster care across the country.

Every year, 20,000 young people "age out" of foster care. Think about how challenging this time can be – all of a sudden you're on your own, you don't have the same family safety net to fall back on that others may have. You're trying to find a job or enroll in school. Many face housing instability, and up to one-third will experience homelessness at some point during this transition.

Jeremy from Hamilton County, Ohio, shared with my office that he entered foster care at age 10 and aged out at 18 with no permanent home. He entered college but found himself homeless during college breaks. Jeremy persevered and he became an advocate for others, because no young person should have to experience what he did.

Ohio's foster care youth, alumni, and allies set out to solve this problem. They put forth the ideas that became the bipartisan *Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities Act*, so that foster care alumni nationwide can have a place to call home. This legislation has the support of nearly 100 organizations and 55,000 current and former foster youth.

Congresswoman Dean introduced this bill in the House, and this week, Senator Grassley and I introduced this bill in the Senate.

This bill provides additional resources in more communities, and it encourages local housing and child welfare agencies to work together to better serve our young people.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to moving on each of these bills before the end of the year.

But this is just the first step.

Carbon monoxide isn't the only way people are poisoned in their homes – there are many health hazards in homes across this country, including lead, that we need to do a lot more to combat. There are severe housing shortages in urban and rural areas, and in Indian Country. We face expiring assistance contracts on thousands of affordable units in rural communities. And we see a growing need for affordable senior housing options.

We have to tackle this crisis from both sides. Corporations frankly are not paying workers enough to afford a place to live. And we need to create more safe, affordable homes – and preserve the ones we've got.

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