

Hilowle Aden  
Lewiston

Dear Labor and Housing Committee,

I lived in market rate housing when I first moved to Lewiston. When I married, my wife and I started a family and moved into public housing. The public housing was very nice, well organized, and the environment outside was very clean. Public housing is very clean. It's market rate units where there are more problems. Totally different. The only reason we moved from public housing was because we needed more space for our growing family. We applied to Section 8 and used that for a while. I lived on Birch Street for three years, in a fourth floor apartment. It was hard to walk up stairs with groceries and our children. You could only do it once a day, it was so much work to get the family up the stairs. The building was not in very good condition. Section 8 helped to pay rent, but the building was very old. The building had rats, was not very clean, and when you called management for help, it was hard to get help. It was only when you called Section 8 that you would get help. The trash can outside was not good. The rent was \$1,200 a month in 2018. I waited for 5 years on the waitlist to move to affordable housing again, which I now have today, at Raise-Op. Today, I finally have affordable housing and four-bedrooms, two bathrooms, and I'm on the second floor. This works best for my family, more space. My rent is lower, so I can afford to work and still pay my rent on time without Section 8. When there is a problem, we request it, and you get a response right away. Other places you have to wait 2 years to get something fixed. My kids can use stairs more easily. People need something they can afford, a solution right away. They need a quick response from powerholders. Rents are very high in market rate units. For a one-bedroom some places are charging the same amount I pay for my four-bedroom apartment, because my apartment is affordable, and the market rate units are not affordable. Many people get evicted from market rate units. Many landlords don't listen or respond. We need to build more affordable buildings that help people. It's not just the affordability, we need good housing that treats people well. I know many people, black, white, brown, people with disabilities. Everyone needs affordable housing. Whether someone gets public assistance or is working a full time job, everyone needs and deserves an affordable home. Right now, I know many families who want to move to affordable housing. Especially people who are evicted or about to be evicted. A lot of people apply, some are waiting, some have been waiting for 2 years. Some people have language barriers, and it's hard to negotiate with landlords. When there isn't available housing, it's very hard. I know many people have children who are poisoned with lead, I try to help them report it, they say "don't help me because I will lose my apartment." Afraid to take action. That's unsafe. Other people have lost their job and will end up homeless because they still need to pay rent. I know some people who had water that was not working, and the landlord wouldn't fix it. People needed to use the bathroom but couldn't. It wasn't safe. The family tried to use the bathroom when it wasn't working and it caused a leak. Then the landlord kicked them out, and now they're homeless. To me, affordable housing means a good environment. Safety. Love. A place that makes you feel better. When everyone has good housing, safety, people will love each other more, respect, cooperate together, it will decrease disease and safety concerns, increase love, and help people think "this is my home," where they can have freedom and a good life. Please support this bill, so that more people can have a safe home.

Hilowle Aden, Lewiston