



To Whom This May Concern:

I believe the Housing Industry Foundation is doing an amazing thing by giving back back, while also giving forward. This has always been my motto as well. This is actually the reason that I decided to go into the Social Welfare field. I love helping people, and I try my hardest to make sure those I work with have the proper resources and tools that they need to succeed. I've always wanted to be the reason someone said, "because of you, I didn't give up!" or "If it wasn't for you helping me with _____, I am not sure how I would have made it through."

I also realize this kind of work is definitely not for the faint of heart, nor is it for the recognition. I was always given a weird look when people asked what I wanted to be when I grew up or what I was going to school for. I would say "I just want to help people", which is true. A few of my past jobs where I learned the most and made the biggest impact was while I was working at an inpatient psychiatric facility with sexually abused adolescents, this was straight out of undergrad.

Then I got a job working at a special needs private school where I started at the administrative assistant and within 3 years working there, I became one of the Assistant Directors of the school. I have also done parenting and high school counseling at a point in time. Throughout all of these jobs, my main goal was to help! I wanted to try to impact at least one person or one family and ironically through helping them, I was able to help myself. I know that social welfare jobs are not particularly paid well, but I willingly chose this field for the outcome, not the income.

I started Graduate school for Social Work in March 2017, and I just finished this past February! The last few years have been crazy due to working full time jobs, while attending classes and working unpaid internships, dealing with mental health issues, family death, and so much more... all for two and a half years! But I am so glad to say that through all of that, I was able to obtain and interview for a Social Worker with Monterey County, while still in Florida, and still in school. I was offered the Job in January and I finished School the end of February and moved out here to San Jose, CA (where I was born and raised) to start work as a Monterey County Department of Social Services Family Reunification Social Worker! Since moving to CA, I have been having a very hard time finding housing.

I work for Monterey County in Salinas. This is about an hour commute from San Jose. I have been staying with my older sister, in her studio apartment while trying to find housing. It is really hard, and I keep getting denied because of my credit score, which I am actively working on by paying things off etc., and the past rental history of a few late payments. I now have a steady income in a job that I went to school for and see myself in the long term. I am in a much better place than I was while living in Florida and I don't think people are realizing that because they are only looking at the numbers, which is unfortunate.

I would love to be a part of this program. I can see how it can benefit people like me, who are working really hard to change their past by doing what they can to better their future. I am 26 years old, and like I stated before I was able to learn by teaching others and by figuring life out.

If I am accepted, I would do all that I can to save as much money as possible to better myself so that I can soon help others who might be going through a similar situation. I also see myself possibly transferring to Santa Clara County as a Social Worker as there is a higher need here than Salinas. I also see myself possibly working to obtain Licensure as a social worker in the future. It is all about

opportunities and chances, and I feel we need to give people the right chances to see what they are capable of rather, than deeming them inappropriate without at least offering resources or help.

This program will impact my household tremendously because I would be able to fully focus on my job, without the constant worry of my sister telling me to move out and I would be able to give 110% to the clients that I have because I would be in a better state mentally. I say all this to say that I hope that I can be taken into consideration for this Affordable Housing Initiative Program. I would greatly appreciate it and if I do not get selected, I know that it is for the betterment of someone else.

Thank you so much!

Shanique Walker