

Pogue says she contacted a liaison at Homes for Good to figure out assistance in moving her family, but that didn't pan out.

Pogue's neighbor at the time, who lived in the connecting unit of the duplex, was also on Section 8 housing. Pogue says that neighbor did sign the 60-day notice, only to have Homes for Good say afterward that they wouldn't be able to help with moving costs.

Homes for Good did not end up forcing Pogue to move. The landlord, after being indicted, moved into the other, then empty, duplex unit, right next door to Pogue and her family.

During this time, there were a lot of loud noises, Pogue says, probably from construction as the landlord was trying to get the unit ready for a new tenant. This only heightened Pogue's PTSD symptoms.

"Next thing I know, he's living in the unit right next to me and they're [Homes for Good] letting me sit there," Pogue says. "It's too dangerous for them to be able to deal with, but I have to sit there with my kids."

Pogue says her landlord was professional about the situation; if he had to collect rent or deal with something regarding housing, he would have his "ex-wife, daughter or female friend with him." She says it was the situation in general that triggered her PTSD.

Despite feeling anxious, Pogue says she couldn't afford the costs required to move into other housing.

The living situation sparked Pogue's PTSD and anxiety, and she says she was triggered constantly — resulting in a PTSD episode so severe that she nearly overdosed on her anxiety medication. Her children were momentarily taken out of her custody and placed under a voluntary 10-day safety plan with the Department of Human Services' Child Protective Services.

During this time, Pogue's power was shut off because she couldn't pay her utility bill. Her Springfield Utility Board (SUB) deposit was \$800, she says, more than what she had to pay for rent.

Pogue says she told Homes for Good about her situation, but no financial assistance was offered.

She reached out to other federal agencies for help, but it was near the end of the year, and most agencies were out of their allotted annual funding from the government, she says.

Because Pogue's unit was without power, a violation of Homes for Good's housing terms, the organization threatened to revoke her Section 8 status. Eventually ShelterCare offered to pay Pogue's utility bill, allowing her to stay on Section 8 housing.

From there, Pogue's housing situation continued to be rocky. She got the news that a new management company, Nugget Property Management, would be taking over her unit.

She received this news from Nugget itself, having heard nothing from Homes for Good, she says.

Pogue says she didn't sign any rental agreement with Nugget Property Management because Homes for Good told her the agreement was between her and the new property management company. She says she was skeptical. She didn't want to sign a rental agreement without Homes for Good being involved, as she thought this might be a way for them to "cut her out" of the Section 8 program.

Over the next few months, Pogue received dozens of letters from Nugget, Homes for Good and DHS.

A lot of the letters had inconsistencies. For example, the letters she received from Nugget said she had not been paying her rent, though she says she had. One letter from Nugget said she owed more than \$1,000 in back rent, though the next month she received another letter revealing an alleged overdue balance of about \$200.

Pogue says she couldn't respond to any of the letters or phone calls from any of the agencies due to her PTSD — which was only made worse by what she considers "harassing" communication tactics.

"I've never been one of those people to not be responsible," Pogue says, "especially when it comes to housing."

With her PTSD, Pogue says, "I just feel like my body is working against itself."

Pogue says both Homes for Good and the Department of Human Services were aware of her PTSD, but made no efforts to handle it in a thoughtful manner.

"I do not feel that HACSA [Homes for Good] nor DHS have dealt with this situation appropriately nor do the people I'm working with in these agencies seem to have any idea of what PTSD is and how to handle it," Pogue says in her discrimination complaint to HUD.

However, a lack of evidence of any actual violation of the law, combined with Pogue's inability to tell her story in full, led to her lawsuit being dismissed.

According to court documents, U.S. District Judge Ann Aiken, the judge presiding over Pogue's case against Homes for Good, said, "I have great sympathy for plaintiff's situation. But federal courts are courts of limited jurisdiction. In this case, I only have jurisdiction over her case if she has alleged HACSA [Homes for Good] violated federal law."

She continues: "Plaintiff has failed to state a claim for disability discrimination."

Aiken said that, although Pogue's PTSD was clearly debilitating, Homes For Good was not legally compelled to help her find new housing, had no need to hold to their promise to not alert her landlord of their severing ties, or provide any other extra accommodations to her outside of what the Fair Housing Act requires.

Pogue's court case was dropped in April. She and her children are still living in that same duplex. The landlord left the unit in September 2017, and another tenant is now currently living there.

Eventually the letters and phone calls stopped. The last letter she received from Nugget Property Management, in February of this year, said that management of the property would return to her old landlord — who Homes for Good said they were cutting ties with.

Pogue says she hasn't heard anything further from Homes for Good about that, nor anything more about her landlord's indictment.

Homes for Good is still paying her portion of rent through Section 8. Pogue says she hasn't heard anything further from DHS or Child Protective Services.

"It's just really silent right now," Pogue says. "It's a relief. I just don't know what's coming next."

"I'm just trying to heal right now," she says. "I just want to get back to the point where I can be able to answer the phone again," something, Pogue says, her PTSD hasn't allowed her to do.

Ela Kubok, Homes For Good's communications director, would not comment specifically on Pogue's interactions with the organization. She says "Homes for Good policy prohibits confirmation of status or disclosure of any personal information regarding participants of our programs. Such information is considered private and confidential."

Pogue is currently on Springfield's Community Development Advisory Committee, a group appointed by the City Council to "provide a means of citizen involvement in an advisory capacity to the Council in policy decisions regarding the City's housing and community development needs," according to the city's website.

She says she hopes her background and experiences can help guide the city on decisions around housing, adding that the committee has already advised the Springfield City Council to allot part of their leftover budget from the last fiscal year to emergency housing resources.

Pogue says her family is still trying to find another place to live. The process is daunting, she says, in light of all they went through just to secure their current living situation. She also doesn't want

to risk leaving this housing situation and, with unforeseen circumstances, potentially becoming homeless again.

"It's kind of tainted," Pogue says of her family's current duplex. "It doesn't really feel like home, but we don't want to go back on the street."

Jazlyn Moulton is Pogue's oldest daughter at home. Moulton, 17, is a junior at Springfield High School. She echoes her mother's concerns about searching for new housing.

"We're looking. It's hard for her," Moulton says of her mother. "So, I've been looking, too, but it's hard when you go to look at a place and there are, like, 20 other people also looking there."

Moulton has run for Miss Lane County's Outstanding Teen two years in a row. Her platform was homelessness and hunger prevention. She says her own family's issues with housing have influenced the ways she thinks.

"It makes me see more of what other people go through," Moulton says. "It's not just us."

Both Pogue and Moulton say they now understand that what happened to them can happen to anyone. Pogue says that, for low-income people and people on Section 8, the process of trying to acquire housing after you've lost it can be a slippery slope.

And the barriers that hold back people with mental health issues are unfathomable.

"You get divorced and things change so quick. I don't think people realize," Pogue says. "You're doing fine, but what if you lost your husband? Would you be able to make it? I don't think people really think about that."

She continues: "You can lose your standing just like that."

"It doesn't matter who you are," Moulton says. "You could be doing everything right and it won't matter. Someone else can mess it up for you."

**'It doesn't really feel like home, but we don't want to go back on the street.'**

— BERNICE POGUE

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