



HOUSING ALLIANCE

March 2, 2017

House Committee on Human Services and Housing
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: HB 2004

Chair Keny Guyer, Vice Chair Olson, Vice Chair Sanchez, Members of the Committee

For the record, my name is Alison McIntosh and I am writing to you today on behalf of the Oregon Housing Alliance. Thank you for your time today. I am writing to express the Oregon Housing Alliance's strong support for HB 2004.

First, the Oregon Housing Alliance is a coalition of more than eighty organizations from all parts of the state. Our members have come together with the knowledge that housing opportunity is the foundation on which all of our success is built – individual success as students, parents, workers, and community members as well as the success of our communities. We represent a diverse set of voices from including residents, local jurisdictions, non-profit housing developers, and organizations working to meet basic needs in every corner of our state.

We believe that all Oregonians need a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home. Today, we simply don't have enough affordable homes for people who need them, and vacancy rates have dropped precipitously towards zero in communities across Oregon. As vacancy rates have dropped, rents have gone up, significantly, and for every tenant that gets a no cause eviction notice, or can no longer afford to pay that rent increase, there are more and more tenants waiting behind them to move in.

Today, I want to share some of the stories we've heard as we've gone across Oregon to meet with members, to identify problems and solutions, and to engage people in discussion about our housing crisis. Every community we visited, we heard stories about tenants struggling to make ends meet, trying to get back on their feet after a no-cause eviction, and people trying desperately to provide what we all want – safety and stability for their families and their kids.

On Monday this week, we visited with immigrant and refugee elders. We heard stories about the fear they feel in asking for repairs, because their property managers or landlords have threatened them with no cause evictions.

Two weeks ago, we sat with tenants from North Portland, and listened to stories about homes covered in mold, infested with cockroaches, mice, and more – because the tenants were terrified to ask for repairs because of the threat of no cause evictions.

That same day, we heard the story of a woman who was afraid to come home from work, for fear of finding a no cause notice taped to her door.

In January, we read the story of the elderly woman who was one of several tenants who received a no cause notice in a building in Forest Grove. She said to the reporter that she thought she could have survived experiencing homelessness until she got cancer, and but now she wasn't so sure.

Before that, it was the several hundred dollar rent increases in Albany, Eugene, Bend, and Ashland. Before that, it was the building in Tigard that got emptied out thanks to no cause eviction notices, and that left a teenager worrying about where her family would sleep at night rather than worrying about her homework.

There are two common threads through these stories. The first is that the people who tell them are just like you and I. These are people who work hard every day to make a better life for themselves and their family, and see those dreams put on hold while housing instability wreaks havoc on their lives. Their lives are uprooted from communities they've lived in for years or even a generation. Their kids are moved from school to school. Sometimes the worst happens and they end up experiencing homelessness.

The other common thread, which is both the best and worst part is that their stories are to a large extent preventable.

Your action can help prevent more of these stories. Today, we are here to ask you to help take action to ensure people don't live in fear of the notice on the door. We are here to ask you to take action to ensure tenants can enjoy the stability and safety of a home knowing that they won't be asked to leave tomorrow simply because the landlord has decided not to rent to them anymore.

Today, we are asking to you to take action on HB 2004 and to adopt some modest changes to landlord tenant law. Those changes are:

- First, to remove the ability of landlords to evict tenants without a reason. HB 2004 proposes to leave all the existing for-cause statutes alone and to simply add four landlord business reasons. Those reasons are: to allow themselves or a family member in; to sell the unit to someone who intends to occupy it as their primary residence; to remove the unit from residential use; and in the situation where the repairs are substantial and the tenant could no longer live in the unit while repairs are being made.
- Second, the bill removes the preemption on rent stabilization. It does not impose any rent regulation on any community but instead returns this option to local governments who best know their local housing markets.

I want to emphasize that rent stabilization is a tool that is primarily designed to prevent displacement, and to slow the rate and speed of rent increases. Rent stabilization is not intended to create affordable units, and it is not intended to make units affordable. We have different tools for that. This tool will simply slow the rate and speed of rent increases. I would

also note that today, over 150 local jurisdictions use some form of rent stabilization, and these policies are incredibly diverse and varied. Communities in Oregon should have this option to consider.

I also want to reiterate that new development and rent stabilization are complementary strategies – we can both incentivize new development and create an environment in which new units are being built, and protect the people who live in existing rental homes. These are not mutually exclusive, and we should allow local jurisdictions to best craft policies to respond to their local markets.

Since May, the Housing Alliance has spent months working in workgroups, discussing problems facing our communities, and arriving at agreement around solutions. We have an agenda that is built to address three major problems:

- First, to address emergencies such as homelessness, rent increases, and evictions;
- Second, to help build more affordable homes – both rental and homeownership across Oregon; and
- Third, to keep the existing affordable housing we have.

We know we can solve the housing problems faced by our communities. We also know that trying just one strategy will not work – we need to address immediate needs like evictions and out of control rent increases, while we work to build more supply. We cannot simply look for the easy way out of this housing crisis – we need to provide basic protections to people in our communities while we act to build more homes. It is not an either or situation.

We know what home, and what stable housing, means to all of us. When people have safe and stable housing, it has important and significant benefits. Kids are stable in school and able to focus on the things that matter – being kids, doing their homework – and not worrying about where their families will sleep at night. Parents are able to focus on work and taking care of kids. Everyone’s stress decreases and health improves. Safe and stable housing that people can afford is key to accessing opportunity.

Thank you very much for your time this morning, and we are looking forward to working with you this session as you seek ways to address our housing crisis across Oregon, and to create opportunity through safe and stable homes.

Sincerely,



Alison McIntosh
On Behalf of the Oregon Housing Alliance

Housing Alliance Members

1000 Friends of Oregon
211info
A Community Together (Lane County)
Aging in the Gorge
Benton County Health Department
Benton Habitat for Humanity
Bienestar
Bradley Angle
CASA of Oregon
Central City Concern
Church Women United of Lane County
City of Beaverton
City of Eugene
City of Hillsboro
City of Portland
City of Tigard
Clackamas County
Coalition of Community Health Clinics
Coalition of Housing Advocates
Common Ground OR-WA
Community Action Partnership of Oregon
Community Alliance of Tenants
Community Energy Project
Community Housing Fund
Community Partners for Affordable Housing
Community Vision
Cornerstone Community Housing
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
Enterprise Community Partners
Evolve Property Management
Fair Housing Council of Oregon
Farmworker Housing Development Corp.
FOOD for Lane County
Habitat for Humanity of Lincoln County
Habitat for Humanity of Oregon
Habitat for Humanity Portland/Metro East
Hacienda CDC
Housing Authority of Clackamas County
Housing Development Center
Human Solutions
Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization
Impact Northwest

JOIN
Lane County Health and Human Services
League of Women Voters of Oregon
Lincoln County
Mainstream Housing Inc.
Metro
Momentum Alliance
NAYA Family Center
Neighborhood Economic Development Corp.
Neighborhood Partnerships
NeighborImpact
NeighborWorks Umpqua
Network for Oregon Affordable Housing
Nightingale Public Advocacy Project
Northwest Housing Alternatives
Northwest Pilot Project
Oregon AFSCME Council 75
Oregon Center for Public Policy
Oregon Coalition on Housing & Homelessness
Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities
Oregon Food Bank
Oregon Housing Authorities
Oregon Law Center
Oregon Opportunity Network
Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon
Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives
Portland Tenants United
Proud Ground
Raphael House
REACH CDC
St. Vincent de Paul of Lane County, Inc.
ShelterCare
Sisters Habitat for Humanity
Sponsors, Inc.
SquareOne Villages
Street Roots
Transition Projects
Urban League of Portland
Washington County
Welcome Home Coalition
Willamette Neighborhood Housing Services