

Iris Hodge Testimony in Support of HB 2004

March 2, 2017

Dear Members of the House Committee on Human Services and Housing,

I ask for your support for HB 2004 to end no-cause evictions and repeal the ban on rent stabilization.

My husband and I have recently, although not for the first time, experienced a rent increase so large that it forced us to move. On Jan 27th, after renting our house in SE Portland for just 10 months we were told via text message, that our rent was being raised from \$1400.00 a month to \$1550. She told us she was so sorry and that she understood if we had to move. We were never late on our rent once. We never had complaints or asked for anything out of the ordinary in repairs. We asked her to honor repairs promised at move-in, none of which were done. We invested our time and money to build a fence, fix the toilet and shower and patch up the leaky garage but did that gain us any loyalty from our landlord? No.

We were forced to borrow money from our family to move to a house more than 20 minutes away from my son's school and his friends. My son used to be able to ride his bike back and forth from school but she took that option from him. Our landlord could give us no reason why she needed to increase the rent so dramatically and seemed to care less about the consequences to my family. Although, we found a way to get the finances together for our move, I know many who aren't as lucky.

Right now, some landlords are using no-cause evictions to avoid the simple legal process for removing tenants. Instead of identifying a valid reason to remove a family from their home, bad actor landlords, like mine, are terminating leases to raise rents ,or even worse, discriminate against certain tenants. They are also used to retaliate against tenants who ask for necessary repairs, making renters afraid to request basic repairs needed to keep their homes safe and habitable. Evictions with no reason and extreme rent increases cause immense financial hardship on working families, just like mine, that can force us to deplete our savings, force us into homelessness and send us into a spiral of poverty. Moreover, these practices disproportionately impact families of color, worsening inequities and pulling communities apart.

I am one of 1.5 million people in our state who are experiencing vulnerability in my housing. This is an epidemic and not something that should be ignored or brushed aside as non-urgent. We need families to be able to live and support their local economies! The small businesses in my neighborhood rely on the customers that are facing these increases and they will suffer if we don't stop the practices that HB 2004 addresses.

Evictions and economic displacement impact us all by putting more economic burden on our already over crowded social services, shelters, and hospitals, by families who become homeless and other costs associated with the disruption caused by housing instability. By contrast, stable homes promote educational opportunity for children and economic opportunity for families – allowing Oregonians to save for a house, pursue new employment options, and open new businesses.

HB 2004 will protect housing stability by creating a just cause eviction standard, which would require a legitimate reason for termination, such as a lease violation or a landlord's business or family necessity; and by repealing the state prohibition on local jurisdictions' ability to consider rent stabilization policies, such as ordinances that would slow the rate and speed of rent increases for tenants while still allowing landlords a fair rate of return.

In closing, I urge you to support HB 2004.

Thank you,

Iris Hodge