

February 28, 2017

Dear Members of the House Committee On Human Services and Housing:

I'm writing to you to **urge** your support in **passing House Bill 2004**. I live in Bend where I was born and raised. For more than 10 years, I have worked in this community with the most vulnerable of populations. Years ago, I worked with homeless youth and for the last 4 years I have worked with survivors of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. I can tell you that there is no other issue for DV survivors that could singularly improve their chances of true change more than secure housing. I could tell you about the many clients I have who are living out of their minivans with their children after being evicted for calling the police on their abusers. I could tell you about clients I have who are forced to choose unsafe living situations at the risk of losing their children to the system, all as a result of wrongful no-cause evictions. But I have my own story to tell.

Currently, I live in a rental house with my three children. I work full time and am pursuing a Master of Social Work degree. For 7 years I have lived in this house, initially under a different owner who offered a longer lease. My current landlord will not allow me to occupy the home on any other basis than month-to-month, and threatens me regularly over small matters like HOA infractions (not storing my garbage barrel in the right place), reminding me that he could get someone else in here for much more money.

There are certainly undesirable aspects of our home that we wish would be addressed, but where safety is concerned, he has shown no interest in responding. This includes questionable electrical matters and structural issues. I have learned to be quiet and make no demands for fear of being a "problem renter" and being evicted. When 50 inches of snow fell in January, our roof developed ice dams like most homes in Central Oregon. When the ceiling began to leak above my son's bed, I called my landlord to report the damage. He told me to put a bucket under the leak and wait for it to dry. Two weeks later when the leak persisted and the ceiling began to sag, he sent his son over. He nailed a piece of fencing to the ceiling where the sag is. I offered to take photos to offer to his insurance company. He responded, "No, no, no. We're gonna let it dry out." But no professional ever came to assess, nor did my landlord ever come to see the damage to the ceiling or saturated floor beneath it. Currently, my boys are afraid to sleep in their bedroom.

My landlord has used fear and intimidation against me since the beginning. And in a housing climate such as this, his tactics are working. I literally have NO other options and I make a living wage. At this moment he could evict me and I have no idea where my family would live as I make too much to qualify for public housing and not enough to actually qualify for ANYthing available in Central Oregon. Even still, I am grateful every day that my circumstances are better than that of my clients who are in real danger of physical harm by their abusers.

Imagine asking your own children to sleep in a room with a wet sagging ceiling after driving by a school whose roof fell in from snow. For the sake of my family and the families I advocate for every day, PLEASE support HB 2004!

It is truly emergent!

Yours,

Mandi Copeland

Bend, OR