

To the Legislature, especially members of The House Committee on Human Services and Housing:

As a former renter, now small-scale owner, and life long member of group housing situations, I have grave concerns about the effects of HB 2004. It will make life very uncomfortable for people in shared housing situations which don't fall neatly into your exemption for housemates of the property owner (thank you for at least thinking of that situation, and exempting ADU/duplex "housemates" as well).

Throughout history, one of the most common ways that people have survived housing or financial shortages, is by living together. I am deeply concerned that making it impossible for shared households to self-regulate who lives there, will both create a lot of very painful living situations, and will ultimately shrink the availability of this most basic low-cost housing option, since the idea of not being able to make an untenable housemate leave is making a lot of people very nervous.

Therefore I want to encourage you to broaden your thinking about who should be granted "housemate" type exemptions to HB2004. Owners aren't the only ones who need that flexibility, and shared housing doesn't always occur in someone's primary residence. There are two broad categories you must, please, consider.

First, is the situation of other forms of shared or group housing. In Portland, there are many houses and apartments shared by unrelated adults. For example:

- A group of students or young adults sharing a rented house. Maybe one person acts as the "manager," finding and accepting new housemates when someone moves out, or maybe they all vote on who can move in (and whether someone needs to be booted out).
- Intentional households organized around a common interest or theme, with expectations for behavior, participation, pitching in, and an interview process for getting in. The expectations may or may not be written into the rental agreement, especially if none of the occupants is the landlord.
- Someone rents an apartment then looks for a roommate; or a mom rents a house for herself and her kids, and then looks for another mom with kids to share it with her.
- Formal group homes.
- Grandparents who visit for 3 months every summer, and have an empty condo or apartment that could be rented out the other 9 months of the year (sequential, rather than temporal sharing)—but they won't if they can't repossess it next summer.
- A family moves to Eugene, but one adult must continue in their job in Portland. Instead of selling their Portland home, they keep it for the commuting parent and rent out the extra two bedrooms— if they can't keep control of who lives there and for how long, they will instead leave those bedrooms empty, if they can possibly afford it.
- I have a friend who lives and works in Portland, but married someone who lives on the coast and now goes back and forth. She still has a housemate in her Portland home. But she's concerned about the effect of this legislation on her ability to control her home space, and is debating asking her housemate to leave.

The specifics of these types of housing arrangements are quite variable—they may, or may not, include the landlord; may occur in any type of dwelling (apartment, condo, house) or any type of usage-situation (e.g., primary residence, intermittent living quarters, second home, vacation home, rented space); and can have variable lease arrangements (e.g., one person on the lease with everyone else subletting; everyone on one lease; each person with their own lease). But whatever the permutation, they all still legitimately need the ability to require someone to leave, and to do so without having to pay relocation fees. (And who would have to pay them when none of them is the landlord?)

The reality is, that no matter how carefully you interview and background check people, there are things that you cannot predict (or, under other circumstances, you'd be willing to take a chance on), and sometimes it just really doesn't work out. And often it's for reasons that aren't clear violations of a lease, such as:

- someone is just belligerent and generally uncooperative, or
- they don't really have the time to do 5 hours of gardening—or whatever the shared interest or community obligation was—every week, after all.
- they refuse to come to house meetings, even though they are obligatory.
- the other four housemates are sick of finding vomit and beer cans everywhere.
- he's on the phone a lot, and just cannot figure out how to modulate his voice such that your baby can actually nap from 11-2 every day--despite having discussed this before he moved in.
- The one time I had to use a no-cause eviction was when a housemate started making sexually inappropriate comments when he found out I was dating. The more serious I got about my sweetheart, the more pointed his comments became. It was creepy. I started getting concerned for my safety. But it wasn't the kind of thing I could have taken to court (and court would have taken how long and cost how much?) The best option was to tell him to find somewhere else to leave. But what if I hadn't been the landlord? or was one of those people with split residency and this occurred in the one you would consider not my "primary" home?

Whatever the cause of it being a poor fit, these households must be able to ask a housemate to leave. And they must be able to do so without the primary lease holder—or the landlord—having to pay relocation fees, because in most of those situations, that would be an insurmountable hurdle. If you do not give these types of housing situations an exemption, you will make people extremely gun-shy of having housemates, and a really good, lower-income option will dwindle, making the affordable housing shortage worse.

The second is intentional communities, such as co-housing, or residential communities organized around a particular religious affiliation or spiritual teacher. Although (sometimes) not technically shared housing (in some cases everyone has their own quarters), these groups still share an awful lot of common space, and residents interact on a daily basis. Like intentional households, intentional communities may, or may not, have written down their membership and participation requirements, and if they have, they aren't necessarily written into anyone's lease. But they still need to be able to tell someone to move out, if they no longer uphold the participation agreements or meet the criteria for membership in the community, or if they are just generally causing a lot of social problems.

Thank you for your consideration of my concerns,
Erica Bolliger

"The people who cast the votes decide nothing. The people who count the votes decide everything." ~ Josef Stalin

"Facism should be more properly be called Corporatism since it is the merger of state and corporate power." ~ Benito Mussolini

EARLY WARNING SIGNS OF FASCISM

1. Powerful and continuing nationalism
2. Disdain for human rights
3. Identification of enemies as a unifying cause
4. Supremacy of the military
5. Rampant sexism
6. Controlled mass media
7. Obsession with national security
8. Religion and government intertwined
9. Corporate power protected
10. Labor power suppressed

11. Disdain for intellectuals and the arts
12. Obsession with crime and punishment
13. Rampant cronyism and corruption
14. Fraudulent elections

[editorial: leaders typically have a giant chip on their shoulder about "not being enough" (e.g., small stature, from wrong side of the tracks)]

--By Laurence W. Britt, a result of his research of 7 fascist regimes

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