

Dear Housing and Human Services Committee,

Thank you very much for hearing 6 hours of testimony last night. Hopefully it is clear that this is a statewide problem of enormous consequence. It is not a new problem, it is just that it has grown and trickled up that we are starting to hear more about it.

Much of the testimony against the bill centered on threats from landlords to preemptively raise rents, evict tenants, or sell their properties. Please recognize that this is an acknowledgement of the gross imbalance of power (what threats can tenants offer besides to just be homeless? and to vote against you for voting against them?). Indeed, in a tight housing market, this imbalance of power is manifested as an abject abuse of power, for which the price of inaction is high on the individual, the community, and the tax payer.

It is critical that you realize that supply alone will not fix the problem. I got a no-cause eviction in 1998, back when we had plenty of supply! It was so traumatizing that I still remember where I stood in my living room reading the letter. I still remember the fog of confusion and disbelief. I was a 19 year old single mom in an apartment complex, the only tenant being no-cause evicted. The property management company told me that they didn't have to give me a reason, but not to worry, it wouldn't go on my record and they'd give me a great reference (they did, and they gave me my deposit back, if that tells you what kind of tenant I was - a good one!). Only when I pressed the onsite manager did I find out that someone in the complex thought I had some night visitor, and thought that was unsavory. Their exact words were "We're not running a whorehouse here, Margot." This is exactly the "cause" that the landlords are referring to when they say "proving cause is too hard". It's not too hard, it's illegal. But what 19 year old single mom knows? The resulting displacement was completely destabilizing and ultimately resulted in me losing my job (and thus you giving me food stamps and utility assistance) because I had to move from raleigh hills to hillsboro, far from the job I had been able to walk to. I offer this story as evidence that more supply will not keep people like me from being evicted 19 years ago. More supply is very important, but it does not address the impact of not having strong and enforceable tenant protections.

We do not need no-cause evictions to keep neighbors safe, we have for-cause evictions and they are profoundly more effective than the landlords would let you believe. No-cause evictions exist to retaliate, discriminate, and intimidate. They are not a favor to tenants (a for-cause can easily resolve without any black mark on anyone's record), and they are not a favor to terrified neighbors who would much prefer the landlord used the quick for-cause process than the longer no-cause process on a scary neighbor-tenant.

This is not a democrat versus republican issue. All of your constituents need housing, all of your constituent communities benefit from stable housing.

You must vote yes on House Bill 2004! Your renters are watching, and they need you to vote for justice.

Thank you,

Margot Black  
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